



Scrutiny Group review findings

- Out of Hours

June 2025

Summary

During April and May, our tenant-led Scrutiny Group conducted a review of the emergency service that WCHG provides at evenings and weekends (the Out of Hours service). This report details how the review was conducted, its findings and its recommendations.

Tenants chose to review this service because it is important to tenants and they had previously had concerns about waiting too long on the phone to speak to the Out of Hours call handling service. Tenants wanted to check whether this has improved. The Scrutiny Group reviewed the service performance delivered for tenants by Out of Hours call handling provider, Orbis, as well as the wider out of hours repairs service.

In summary

The out of hours service provided by WCHG offers a vital and high-quality service for tenants. Calls are answered quickly, by knowledgeable staff. Homes are made safe quickly. Recommendations in this report focus on ensuring that the service is accessible for all customers. Members were surprised to learn that 30% of all repairs are emergencies and feel this seems high.

The Review

Members set out to answer the following questions

1. Does Orbis answer calls from WCHG tenants in a reasonable timeframe?
2. Does Orbis correctly diagnose emergency repairs?
3. Does the repairs service meet its target of making safe within 24 hours?
4. Does the Out of Hours call handling service provide a good quality service to tenants?
5. Does the Out of Hours repairs service provide a good quality service for tenants?
6. Does the OOH service provide Value For Money for tenants? For example: How many emergencies had follow-on works? How many were first time fix?
7. Does the OOH provide equitable outcomes for all customers? For example:
 - Do people with a disability get a good service?
 - Do tenants who do not speak English as a first language benefit from this service as much as everyone else?

In completing the review, members of the Scrutiny Group carried out the following activities:

- Selected and listened to 20 call recordings
- Reviewed information available to residents and tenants on the WCHG website
- Reviewed Out of Hours service standards, contractual agreements and performance data
- Benchmarked against other housing associations, using:
 - Data from the Regulator: percentage of emergency repairs responded to within timescales
 - Information available on websites about the out of hours service
- Reviewed transactional satisfaction survey responses
- Interviewed lead managers Lesley Cailey and Naser Patel

Findings

Q1: Does Orbis answer calls from WCHG tenants in a reasonable timeframe?

Findings

Yes. All 20 calls randomly selected by members were answered in a reasonable timeframe. Data provided by the Customer Hub manager shows that calls are consistently handled in a reasonable timeframe, with most calls being answered within 2 minutes. Longer call wait times do sometimes happen. This is due to staff sickness or extreme weather. Orbis employs additional staff during the Winter to address this.

Members noted that a new contract was agreed in February 2025, which includes the right for WCHG to terminate the contract if performance falls below:

- 95% calls answered
- 80% calls answered within 2 minutes

Recommendations

None

Q2: Does Orbis correctly diagnose emergency repairs?

Findings

Members noted that the call handlers asked relevant questions and triaged the response depending on what the customer advised on the telephone. The emergency criteria list is used to triage calls.

The quality of a selection of calls is checked by Orbis each month. The Customer Hub manager also has access to call recordings to assess quality. If the repairs operative who attends onsite states that the repair was not an emergency, this is reported by the repairs team to monthly 'working well' meetings. This allows managers to ensure the questions call handlers ask are still the right ones.

Recommendations

None

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Q3: Does the repairs service meet its target of making safe within 24 hours?

Findings:

In most months, 100% of emergencies are made safe within 24hrs. Not everyone waits 24hrs, sometimes responses are sooner. In April 2025, only 97.6% of emergencies were made safe in 24hrs. Since 1st April 2025, 53 emergencies were not made safe within 24hrs. Almost a quarter of these were drainage issues attended by contractor, Dynorod.

Last year, WCHG reported 99.65% emergency repairs completed within 24hrs. This compares to a sector average of 89% (as reported by the regulator).

Recommendations:

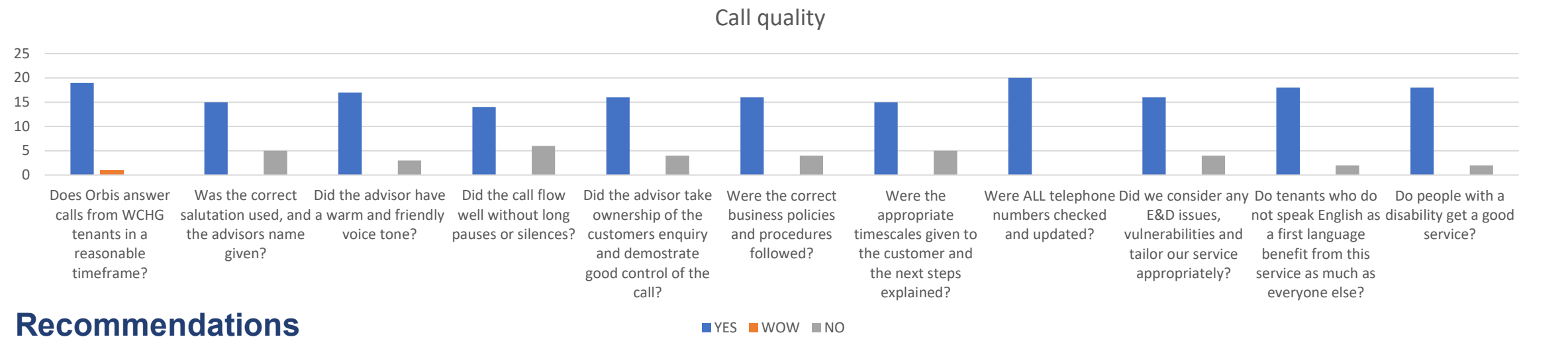
None

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Q4: Does the Out of Hours call handling service provide a good quality service to tenants?

Findings

Scrutiny Group members reviewed 20 calls made to Orbis by tenants and assessed the calls against 11 questions. Overall, members found that quality is good. **Q7** in this report makes recommendations on support for people with vulnerabilities.



Recommendations

WCHG to work with Orbis to ensure call handlers consistently provide timescales, don't have long silences and use salutations

Q5: Does the Out of Hours repairs service provide a good quality service for tenants?

Findings:

Yes, measures are in place to ensure relevant training, safety for both tenants and operatives. Between 1,000 and 2,000 emergency repairs are completed each month, with only 7 complaints about the service last year. Customer calls demonstrated satisfaction.

Members felt the website was good, promoting clearly what the timescale was for emergency repairs and how to contact. It takes only 3 steps to get to emergency repairs on the website. However, the emergency repairs page is very wordy compared to other housing providers.

Recommendations

Review website for emergency repairs, reducing the word count to make it simpler to use.

Q6: Does the OOH service provide Value For Money for tenants?

Findings

Yes, but too many repairs seem to be delivered as emergencies.

- Costs and quality for delivery of the OOH call handling are good value, as evidenced by the recent competitive tender process.
- First time fix for OOH is 96%, with 4% requiring follow-on works. Members think that this indicates value for money.
- Quality of repairs are higher when WCHG attend, however tri-party technicians are often not able to complete the work and follow-on works required
- Scrutiny Group is supportive of management plans to end the Tri-party agreement as they feel the service by WCHG operatives is better than operatives from other organisations.
- Scrutiny Group did not understand why the number of emergency repairs delivered by WCHG is so high compared to other landlords. WCHG appears to have 30% of all its repairs delivered as emergencies. This is not good value for money as emergency repairs are more expensive than routine repairs.

Recommendations

- WCHG to investigate why the percentage of total repairs classed as emergencies is so high and present ways in which this can be reduced, without reducing service to tenants facing emergencies.

Q7: Does the OOH provide equitable outcomes for all customers?

Findings - Disability:

Of the 20 calls reviewed by tenants, one call was identified as not having services tailored appropriately for people with a disability.

In that case a customer was told they need to use jugs of water to flush their toilet and that it wouldn't be an emergency. The tenant had a disability and told the call handler this made it difficult to do. The call handler did not raise this as an emergency. Tenants felt this was not a good experience.

Recommendations

WCHG to develop clearer guidance on what reasonable adjustments are made for customers with disabilities.

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Q7: Does the OOH provide equitable outcomes for all customers?

Findings - Language:

One of the 20 calls highlighted that people whose first language is not English may not be receiving an equitable service.

In that case the call handler was speaking to a tenant who didn't have English as a first language. The call handler was patient and clear and took the time to get all the information they required. However, they did not offer a translation service. Members were concerned that the tenant may not have been able to communicate everything they needed to.

Orbis currently offers customers use of the Language Line service.

Recommendations

Work with Orbis to ensure that a translation service is always offered where communication would benefit from it. Regular monitoring should be introduced to check that this service is being offered when needed.

Statement from Orbis

At Orbis, we appreciate the opportunity to support WCHG through the Out of Hours (OOH) service, recognising the critical role it plays in ensuring tenant safety, asset protection, and responsive customer care. Our experience in delivering OOH services to WCHG has been both challenging and rewarding, reinforcing the value of seamless, round-the-clock support in the housing sector.

Feedback and Recommendations for Service Enhancement

While the current collaboration is effective, there are a few areas where we believe we could collectively improve:

1. Real-Time Communication and Data Sharing

- Implementing a more integrated communication platform could streamline real-time updates, reduce response times, and provide a clearer picture of on-site situations.
- Enhanced access to tenant and property data would empower our team to make quicker, more informed decisions.

2. Proactive Incident Management

- Introducing predictive analytics for common OOH issues, such as burst pipes or security breaches, could help anticipate and prevent incidents before they escalate.
- Regular joint training sessions and scenario planning would further align our teams on best practices.

3. Personalized Customer Experience

- Developing more personalized response protocols based on tenant profiles and historical data can significantly improve customer satisfaction.

Skills and Expertise Our Team Brings

Orbis is proud to offer a team with extensive experience in property management, security, and emergency response.

Our staff are:

- **Highly Trained** in crisis management, customer communication, and rapid problem-solving.
- **Technologically Savvy**, utilising advanced monitoring and reporting tools to ensure seamless service.
- **Customer-Focused**, with a deep understanding of the housing sector's unique challenges.

Closing Thoughts

"We genuinely value our partnership with WCHG and remain committed to delivering a responsive, reliable, and customer-centric OOH service. We look forward to continuing to enhance this collaboration, ensuring the safety and satisfaction of your tenants."

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback. We are always open to further discussions on how we can better support WCHG's mission.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Group recommendations

1. Work with Orbis to ensure call handlers consistently provide timescales, don't have long silences and use salutations.
2. Review website for emergency repairs, reducing the word count to make it simpler to use.
3. Investigate why the percentage of total repairs classed as emergencies is so high and present ways in which this can be reduced, without reducing service to tenants facing emergencies.
4. Develop clearer guidance on what reasonable adjustments are made for customers with disabilities.
5. Work with Orbis to ensure that a translation service is always offered where communication would benefit from it. Regular monitoring should be introduced to check that this service is being offered when needed.

Management response:

- All the recommendations made have been accepted by management.
- Subject to CXC approval, the recommendations will be added to the Scrutiny Group recommendations tracker with target dates and progress will be reported monthly to Scrutiny Group members.
- The recommendation tracker is reviewed annually by Group Audit & Risk Committee.



Wythenshawe
Community Housing Group