

SOUTH ULSTER HOUSING ASSOCIATION

MYSTERY SHOPPING REPORT

MARCH 2018



**Empowering™
Communities**
Enterprise Ltd

BACKGROUND

Mystery Shopping is a well-established and effective method of assessing service quality that has been widely used in the retail sector. Moreover, the Public Sector utilises Mystery Shopping to get a better understanding of customer experience with a view to continual service improvement.

The purpose of Mystery Shopping is to examine how organisational policies and procedures are translated into actual customer service provision. In other words it focuses on the customer's experience, in this instance, of Housing Management and Repairs. Mystery Shopping is not about trying to 'catch people out'; queries are not obscure. In fact, the scenarios relate to everyday issues and the Mystery Shoppers are objective in their approach.

The results provide an opportunity for South Ulster Housing Association to view themselves as customers do. The analysis provides evidence to support and consider any requirements for overall organisational improvements.

Mystery Shopping is a powerful approach to assessing service standards and will complement any other research methods used by South Ulster Housing Association.

METHODOLOGY

Empowering Communities undertook management of this Mystery Shopping exercise in November 2017.

AREAS OF SERVICE

A number of key service areas were examined by Mystery Shoppers, these were:

- Application for Housing
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Complaints
- House Sales
- Maintenance
- Rent Arrears
- Tenant Participation
- Transfer Requests

In addition, Mystery Shoppers made observations on:

- Telephone Service

SCENARIOS

To ensure that the exercise was as effective as possible scenarios were drawn from everyday issues and set the scene for the Mystery Shoppers to enact. The scenarios were proofed to test they were practical, straightforward, relevant, credible and objective. South Ulster Housing Association highlighted the most appropriate desired outcome for each scenario. Scoring and reporting templates used ensured that a consistent approach was taken and that the process was as user friendly as possible.

FRAMEWORK FOR MYSTERY SHOPPING

A programme for Mystery Shopping was devised spanning a four month period commencing 13th November 2017 and concluding week ending 26th February 2018.

Service Area	Number of Calls
Application for Housing	8 calls
Anti-Social Behaviour	8 calls
Complaints	8 calls
House Sales	4 calls
Maintenance (2 scenarios tested) Scenario 1 Scenario 2	12 calls 11 calls
Rent Arrears	8 calls
Tenant Participation	4 calls
Transfer Requests	8 calls

- A total of 71 telephone calls were made by Mystery Shoppers.
- A total of 71 telephone observations were made of the telephone service.
- In total the Mystery Shopping exercise included **142** interactions.

South Ulster Housing Association staff team were informed of the intent to conduct Mystery Shopping but not of the actual timeframe for the exercise.

Reporting templates used by the Mystery Shoppers included a checklist of potential outcomes.

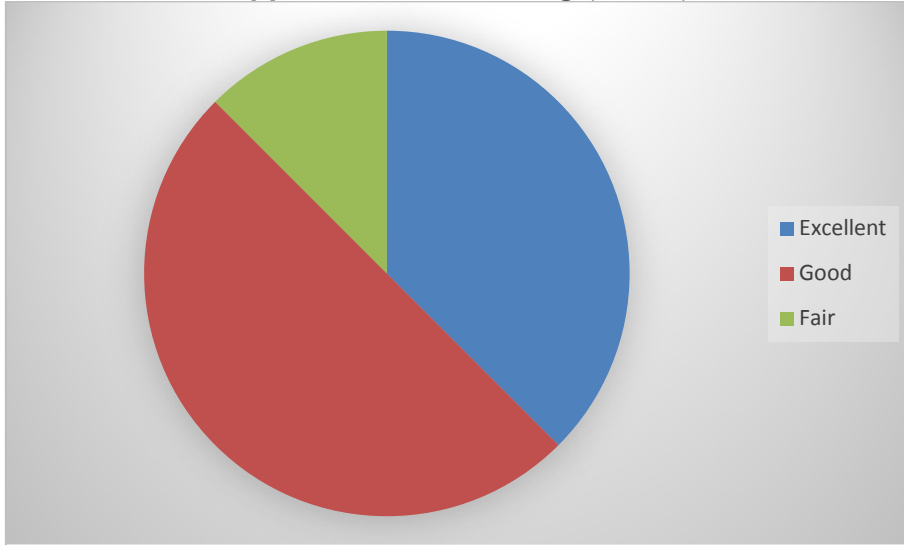
The service experience was scored using ratings as follows:

Poor, Fair, Good and Excellent.

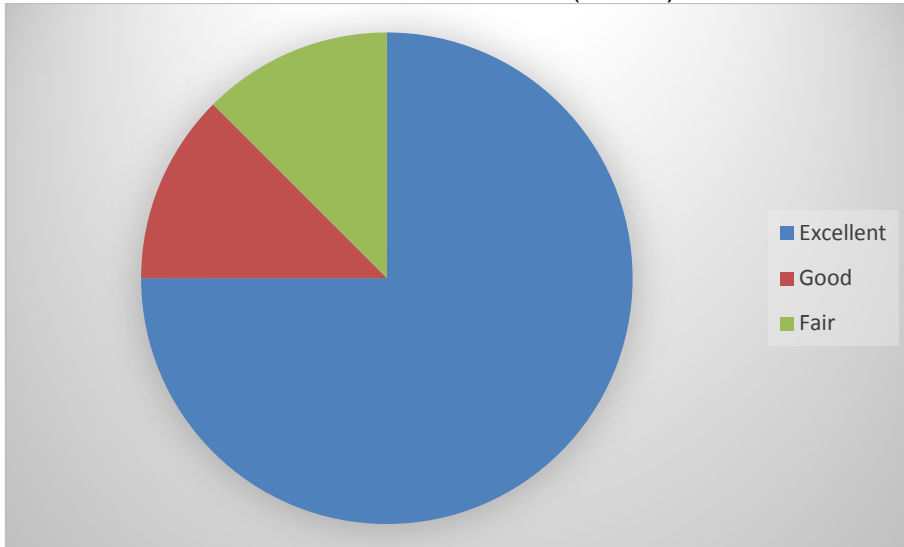
SELECTION OF MYSTERY SHOPPERS

In agreement with South Ulster Housing Association Supporting Communities Staff along with two other social landlord tenants undertook Mystery Shopping calls.

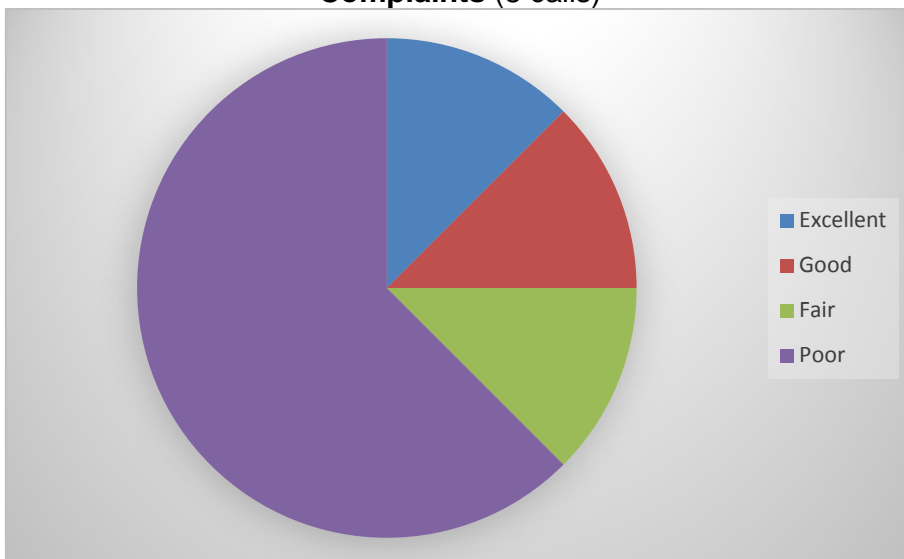
Application for Housing (8 calls)



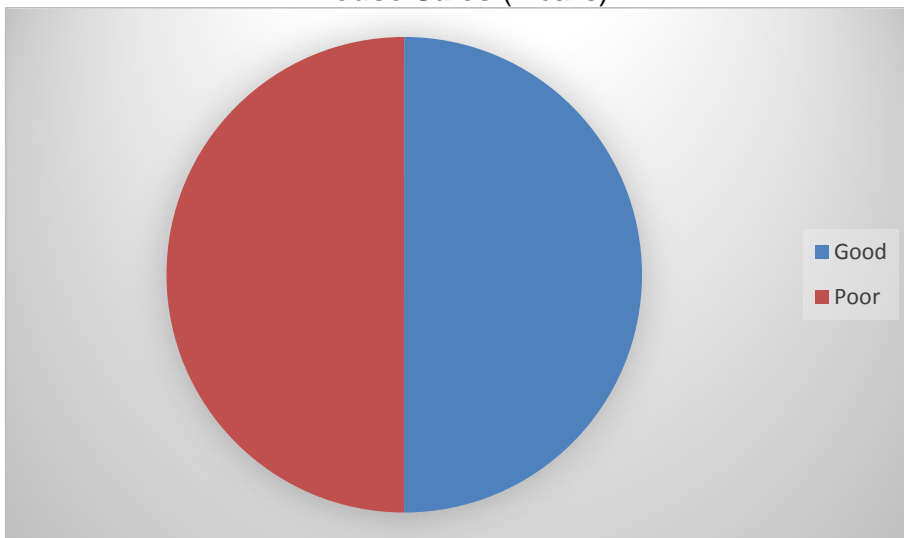
Anti-Social Behaviour (8 calls)



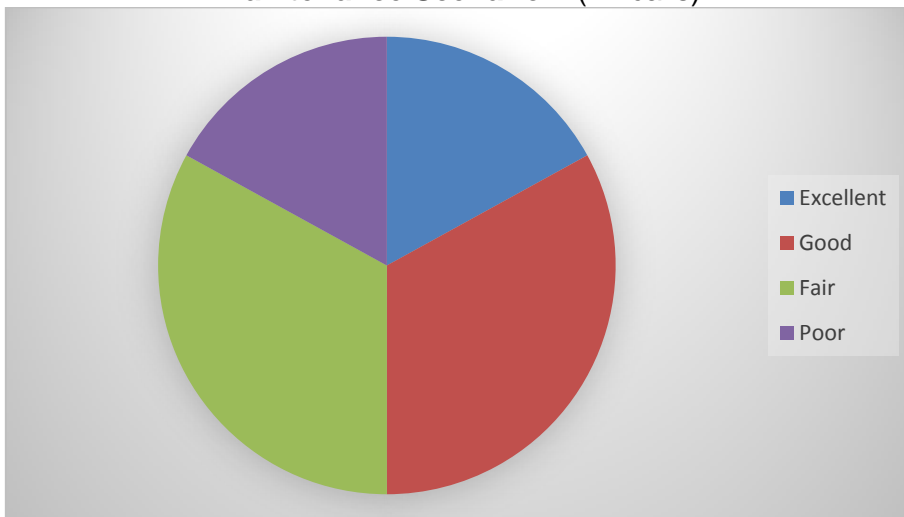
Complaints (8 calls)



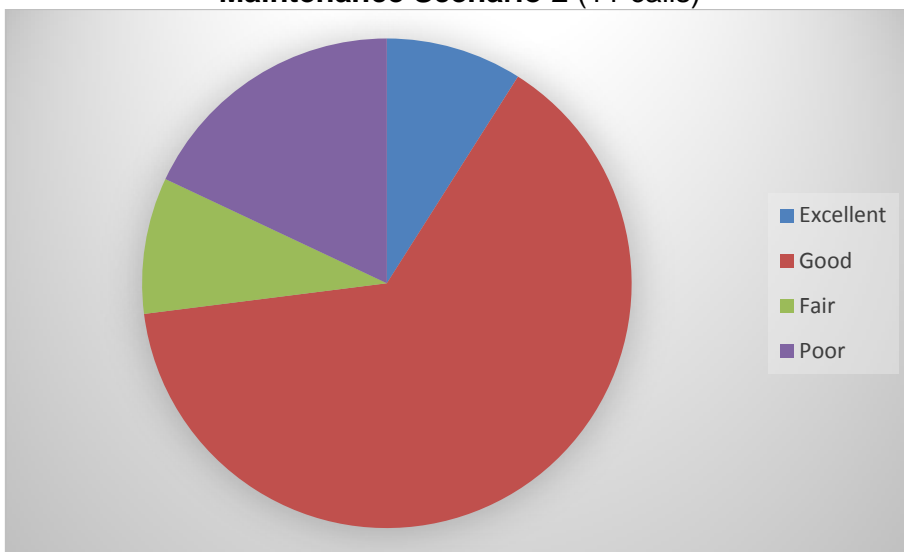
House Sales (4 calls)



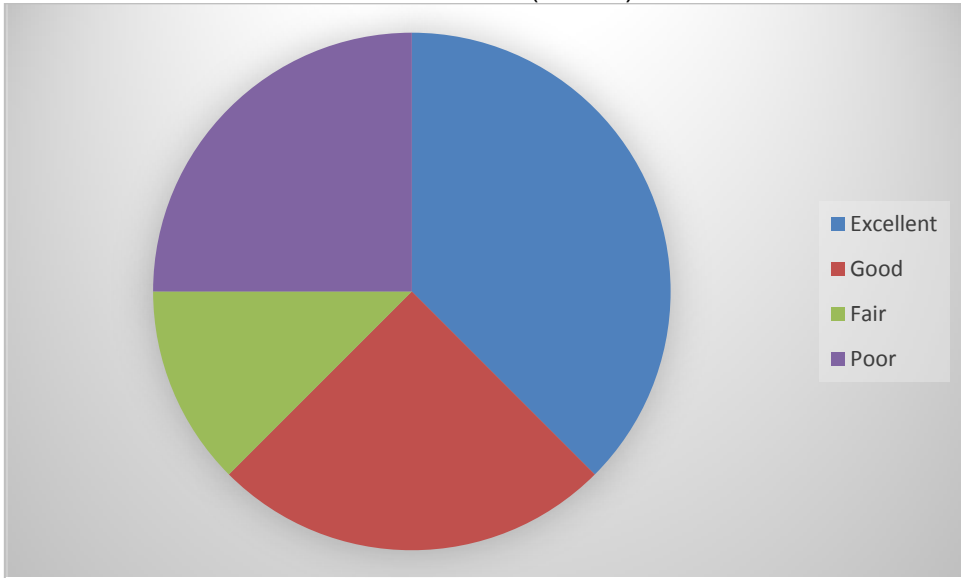
Maintenance Scenario 1 (12 calls)



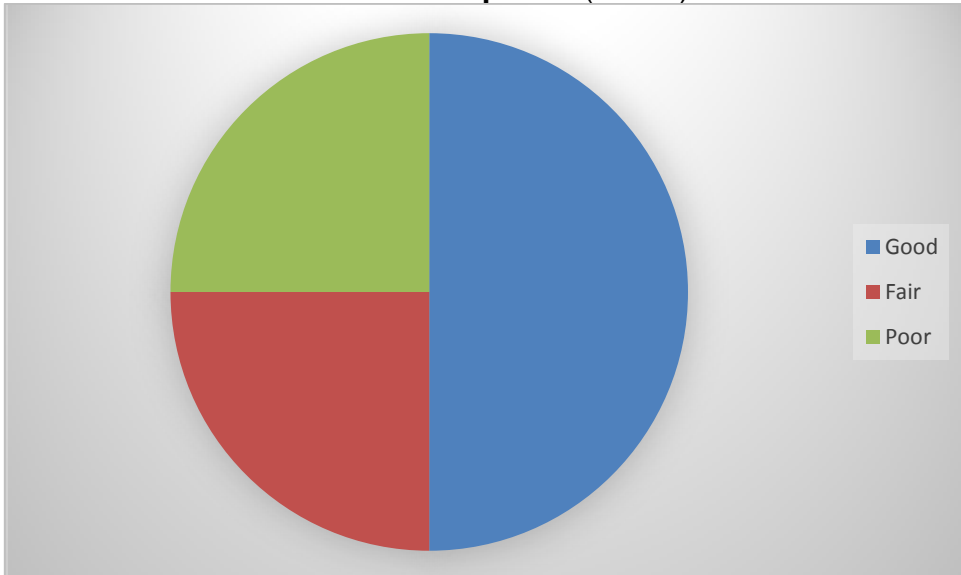
Maintenance Scenario 2 (11 calls)



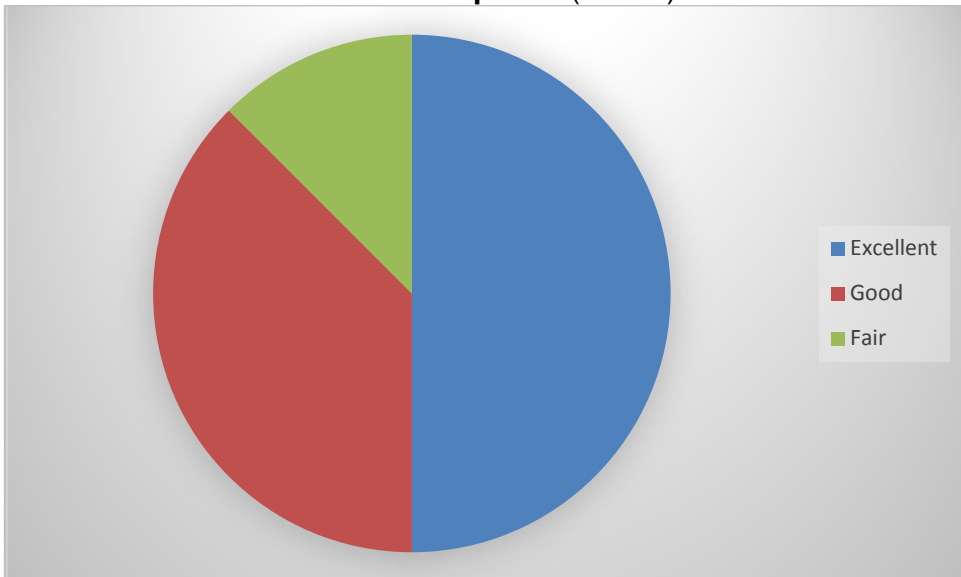
Rent Arrears (8 calls)



Tenant Participation (4 calls)



Transfer Requests (8 calls)



TELEPHONE OBSERVATIONS

SERVICE AREA	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Application for Housing (8)	-	12.5%	50%	37.5%
Anti-Social Behaviour (8)	-	12.5%	12.5%	75%
Complaints (8)	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
House Sales (4)	50%	-	50%	-
Maintenance Scenario 1 (12)	17%	33%	33%	17%
Maintenance Scenario 2 (11)	18%	9%	64%	9%
Rent Arrears (8)	25%	12.5%	25%	37.5%
Tenant Participation (4)	25%	50%	25%	-
Transfer Requests (8)	-	50%	37.5%	12.5

OUTCOMES

In a number of the scenarios it is clear that staff are very conversant with the procedures however there are instances when this is not the case. To address this we will ensure that:

- Staff use the checklists as minimum standard when dealing with enquiries
- All departments have a basic understanding of the work of the other departments.
- Refresher training on complaints policy is provided to all staff
- All staff must provide their name and department when answering a phone-call

- All staff to be cognisant of the Tenants Charter

A training session was carried out by Empowering Communities on the 23rd May to address some of above with additional training for staff scheduled in September 2018.

To conclude on a positive note, the Mystery Shoppers recorded overwhelmingly that their calls were dealt with in a professional and pleasant manner.