
*Results of the
Home Checker
visits to Council
tenant homes*

September 2018

1. What is the purpose of the report?

The purpose of this report is to provide Community Scrutiny Committee with:

- An update on the Home Checker visits to Council tenants homes; and
- What the visits have told us and potential next steps.

2. What is the context?

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is the Welsh Government's (WG) standard for social housing quality. The WHQS was first introduced in 2002, and aimed to ensure that all homes are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. WG set a target for all social landlords to improve their housing stock to meet the WHQS as soon as possible, but in any event by 2020. Carmarthenshire's tenants developed their own standard, called the CHS+, and this was successfully delivered in 2015, well in advance of the WG timescales. We produce an annual business plan that confirms how we intend to maintain and improve the CHS+ in the future.

Carmarthenshire invested over £250m to continue to improve and modernise tenant's homes and this is having a positive impact on tenants' health and well-being¹. To ensure, however, that this standard is maintained and we continue to support tenants, officers were asked to prioritise a programme of visits that allowed us to assess whether or not homes were falling into disrepair through neglect. This was considered a priority by members to make sure tenants are complying with their part of the tenancy agreement and not causing deliberate damage to the property.

3. What has been our approach to home-checker visits

Our approach involved carrying out:

- a) A basic check to all homes on an annual basis through existing visits. This is when housing officers, repair operatives, technical inspectors or service contractors visit a council property and carry out a basic check.
- b) Any issues in terms of condition, tenancy and/or welfare are reported back to the Engagement team to carry out a more in-depth visit to tenant homes. More in-depth visits were also carried out if there were already known intelligence. Some examples include:
 - history of rent arrears;
 - large number of repair calls;

¹ Carmarthenshire's Health Impact Study 2018.

- anti-social behaviour;
- history of non-engagement e.g. not allowing access for annual gas service; and
- low contact tenants e.g. no repairs or visits in last 24 months;

Through the more in-depth visits we have also taken the opportunity to ask tenants what they think of the service as a whole.

The home checker visits will enable us to:

- Identify any rechargeable repairs that the tenant is responsible for paying;
- Provide preventative maintenance advice;
- Identify any wellbeing issues and agree next steps;
- Provide money advice if needed;
- Assess whether the home meets households future needs;
- Report outstanding repairs issues; and
- Identify any breach of tenancy.

4. How many checks have we carried out?

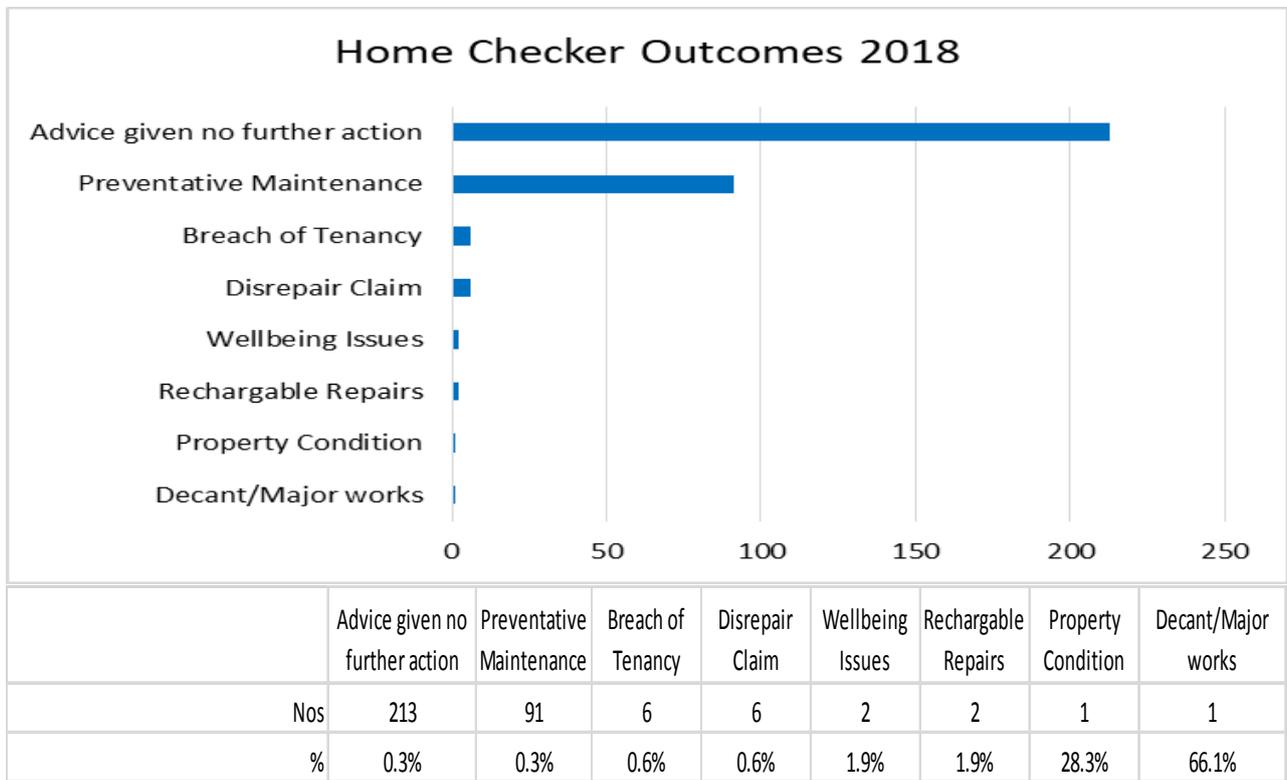
For the period 1st January to 1st September 2018 we carried out 7,611 basic checks to council homes (stock 9,000) through servicing contractors, repair visits and tenancy support calls.

As a result of these visits **322** homes (about 5%) were identified as requiring a more in-depth visit by the housing officer.

Graph 1 on the following page provides the results of these visits and the nature of any follow up action. For 66% of these more in-depth visits (213 homes) no further action was required and general advice was provided.

In terms of preventative maintenance, these included items such as:

- Leaking showers;
- Loose tiles and guttering;
- Broken windows;
- Window locks and handles not working;
- Plugs and sockets loose;
- Toilet leaks;
- Extractor fans not working;
- Damp; and
- Condensation.



Graph1 Results of visits from January to September 2018

The preventative maintenance will enable us to plan for the future and identify component failure. The visits will also enable us to identify and rectify any future disrepair claims against the Authority. We can start to build up a database of issues and plan accordingly.

Where there was evidence of breaches of tenancy or concerns about the condition of the home, tenants were advised to take steps to resolve the issues identified, given a timescale to comply, and where this did not happen enforcement action was taken.

For those tenants with wellbeing concerns, we provided the appropriate advice or support. If we were not able to provide the support needed, the tenant was signposted or referred to appropriate agencies and partners who could help them.

As we do more Home Checker visits this will enable us to identify specifically what help and assistance tenants want e.g. support with Universal Credit and household budget management.

5. What did the tenants think of the service provided?

We have set up a system using what is called the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to measure feedback captured during the more in-depth visits. This was to assess what our tenants thought of the service being provided.

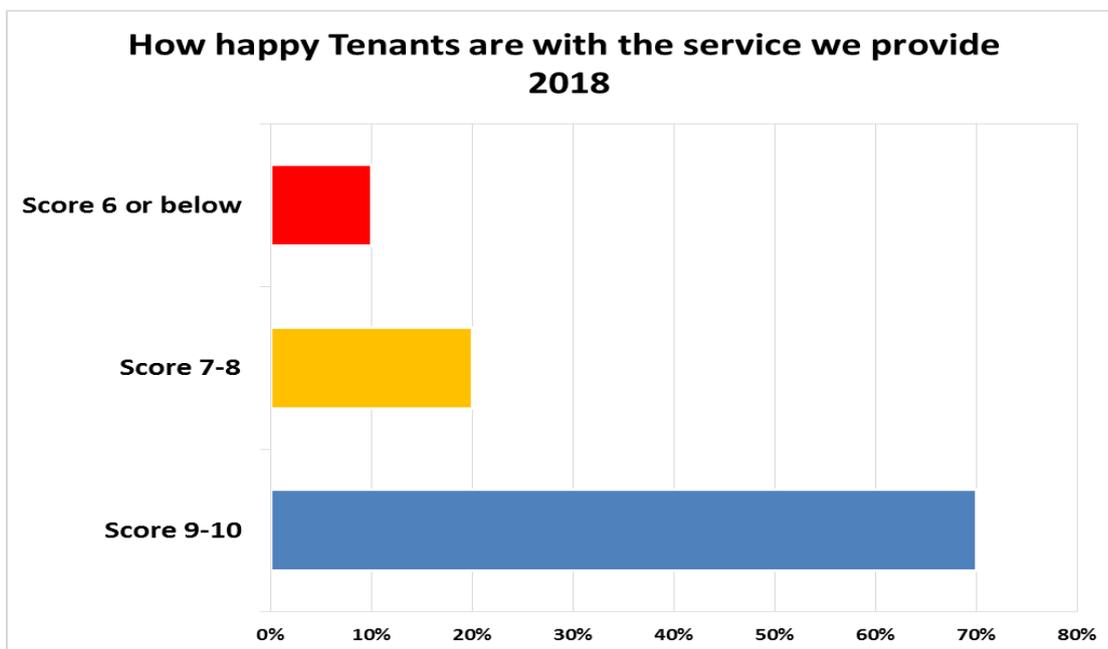
The NPS system uses a scale of 0 to 10 to record the response to a single question and whether the respondent is considered one of the following:

Score	Category	What does it mean?
0-6	Detractor	Tenant likely to make more negative referrals to others e.g. The Housing Service did not provide a very good service
7-8	Passive	Tenant not particularly positive or negative about the service
9-10	Promoter	Tenant likely to make more positive referrals to others e.g. The Housing Service was really good

The single question was:

“How happy are you with the service we provide?”

The results are provided in graph 2 below:



Graph 2: Net promoter score

Please note that the NPS is the percentage of detractors deducted from the percentage of Promoters. So in 2018 we had 70% promoters and 10% detractors to give an overall score of **60%**.

6. How will we further develop our approach?

The Home Checker visits have told us that taking a more proactive approach will have real benefits for us in improving our services to tenants and maintaining/improving council homes.

We will also further refine our approach to get as much intelligence as possible to provide a better service for tenants and provide detailed information for our business planning.

From carrying out this initial work we will:

- Continue with Home Checker and look at ways to improve how we capture data from the visits;
- Consider our approach to preventative maintenance in next year's CHS+ Business Plan;
- Develop and encourage tenants to take a proactive approach in maintaining their homes to a high standard;
- Make our services more effective and responsive by tailoring them more closely to the needs of our tenants;
- Help more tenants with a range of issues including saving money on fuel bills, budgeting and financial assistance and housing support; and
- Further develop our approach to tenant feedback in order that we analyse trends over time.