

Tenant Scrutiny – Reporting repairs online



Report August 2025

Rotherham Federation

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1. Executive Summary

This is the eleventh investigation carried out by Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny panel. We have looked at the system used for tenants to report repairs to the Council.

The aim of the investigation was to get the views of tenants and to try the system out for ourselves, finding out if it is meeting customer expectations and being able to suggest improvements.

The panel carried out their review between May and August 2025. Officers leading on the online system were interviewed and then sent further responses to questions to the panel by email. They also produced a demo video for the panel to watch. Although experiences from other housing providers was asked for via TPAS Connect and through officer contacts, nothing was received. The only comparison could be made through looking at other housing provider websites.

The investigation was concluded with nine recommendations and three suggestions including improvements to the repairs reporting system around time outs, the repairs log, and appointments, as well as making some changes to the wording and pictures to make the platform easier to use. There was also a need to market the Housing Online system further.

A full description of the work completed follows, and a shorter summary report is also available that details the evidence relating to each recommendation.

2. Background

Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny was formed in April 2016. The Tenant Scrutiny panel works together as a group of tenants and residents of Rotherham Council to challenge the council to make sure that it provides high quality services to meet tenant needs.

Tenant Scrutiny creates opportunities to:

- ✓ Offer opinions on behalf of Rotherham Council tenants and make a positive difference for them.
- ✓ Be a 'critical friend' to the Council to be able to work together to make improvements for all.
- ✓ Look at and examine how housing services are performing, comparing them to local and national standards, and other housing providers to ensure that they meet required levels of quality.
- ✓ Make fair and independent suggestions based on the evidence received.
- ✓ Present clear reports and solid recommendations to the council that support ongoing improvement of services to meet tenant needs and address any issues found.
- ✓ Actively help to improve housing services by creating best practices that increase tenant satisfaction, service quality, and value for money.

This is the eleventh investigation by the Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny panel. Previous reports have been submitted on the following topics:

1. Engaging Young Tenants in Rotherham (March 2017)
2. Responsive Repairs: Appointments, Communication Process and Customer Journey (February 2018)
3. Process of Dealing with Anti-social behaviour complaints (January 2019)
4. Home Aids and Adaptations for Tenants (November 2020)
5. Improving Tenant Satisfaction with the Repairs and Maintenance Service (June 2021)
6. How Rotherham Council could improve its communication with tenants (June/July 2022)
7. Whether the Lettable Standard used by Rotherham Council during the voids process is suitable and meets tenant expectations (August 2023)
8. Support for New Tenants (March 2024)
9. Review of Rotherham Council's Tenancy Health Check visits (September 2024)
10. How the Tenant Scrutiny panel can be '*The best that it can be*' (April 2025)

Choice of topic

This topic was suggested by panel members who said that their experience of the Housing Online reporting system for repairs was not always positive. They had found it difficult to register, hadn't found the help guides useful, and found it difficult to rearrange appointments if need be. There was also some confusion over which repairs were the responsibility of the council and the tenant. Some other panel members were not keen to use the system as they preferred the previous online option or phoning into the Council.

This topic was also raised by two people responding to the survey in the previous investigation (best that we can be) when asked what they would like the panel to look at.

Council officers confirmed that the way in which repairs were reported online had changed about 18 months previous. Prior to this, repairs could be reported on a webform.

Relevant legislation:

There are several pieces of legislation that require the landlord to carry out repairs on their homes at their own expense:

Housing Act 1985, section 96¹

Gives secure tenants the right to have certain 'qualifying repairs' carried out at the landlord's expense.

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, section 11²

Landlords must carry out certain repairs to the structure and exterior of dwellings, as well as installations for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sanitation, space heating and water heating.

Secure Tenant of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulation 1994³

Certain repairs should be carried out at the landlord's expense

Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018⁴

Landlords must ensure that rented properties are safe, healthy, and free from serious hazards.

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023⁵

Strengthens the rights of tenants regarding repairs in social housing (particularly damp and mould). It includes Tenant Satisfaction Measures around satisfaction with repairs and with the time taken to complete them.

Safety and Quality Standard Consumer Standards (April 2024), section 1.4.1⁶

Registered providers must provide an effective, efficient and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for the homes and communal areas for which they are responsible.

3. The panel and officers

The panel was made up of tenant and resident representatives from across Rotherham:

David Ramsden (Chair)	Keith Stringer	Madi Jackson
Winnie Billups	Barry Dealey	Rose Jones
Ann Hitchens	Jo Workman	Simon Thorne
Mary Jacques	Tim Pharo	

Thank you to these representatives for their time and commitment.

Also thank you to the Tenant Connectors pool and the many people who took the time to respond to the tenants' survey.

Officer support was provided by:

Caroline Hubbard, RMBC Tenant Involvement Officer
Phil Hayes, Rotherham Federation Chief Executive Officer
Laura Swift, Rotherham Federation Administrative Officer
Rebecca Morrison, Project Solutions

Valuable subject matter expertise was provided by four representatives of the Council:

Tehleel Liaquat, RMBC Programme Manager
Kirsty Faundez, RMBC Workstream Lead
Victoria Broadbent, RMBC Workstream Lead
Andy Lumb, RMBC Partnering Manager

4. Terms of Reference

Aim: To consider the tenant and resident experience of using the online reporting of repairs and make suggestions as to how it could be improved.

Objectives:

To:

- Explore how the reporting of repairs online works in practice.
- Highlight any issues with the system and make suggestions as to how things could be improved.
- Review any complaints or feedback received for the platform.
- Consider the views of other tenants and residents that are using/ potentially could use the system on how easy the platform is to use and its accessibility.
- Explore whether there is value for money when considering the number of people using the system.
- Check how other housing provider systems work.

Scope

The panel would not scrutinise the following as part of this investigation:

- The telephone repairs reporting service.
- Other parts of the Council website.
- The panel agreed to keep the work around damp and mould reporting separate from this investigation.

Measures of Success

- ✓ An upgraded online reporting system that is easy to use and meets the needs of tenants and officers alike.

Benefits

For tenants:

- ☛ An improved repairs reporting system that is easy to use and saves tenants from having to phone the council/ allows reporting 24 hours a day.

For the Council:

- ☛ A reporting system that provides value for money and efficiency for the service.

Risks

The panel were aware of the following risks and indeed found that the first one became an issue during the investigation:

- ! A test system is not available for people to review/trial.
- ! The recommendations may be unachievable in terms of resources required.

5. Methodology

The investigation consisted of:

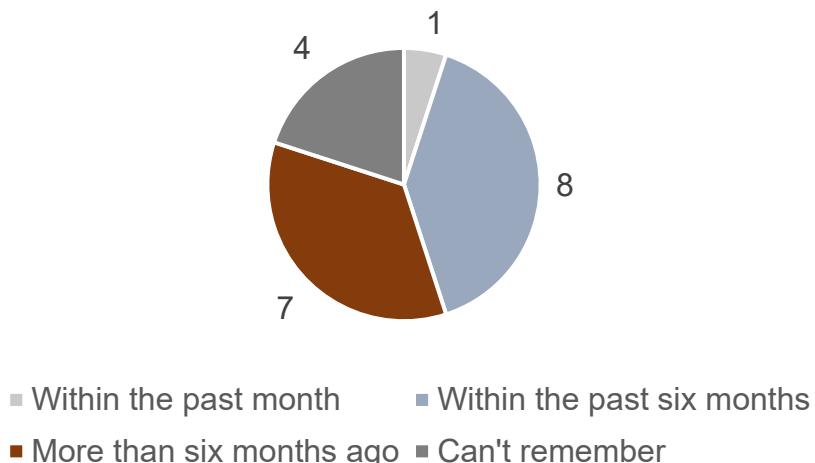
5.1 Survey

A survey was sent out to 500 tenants at random to ask whether they had used Housing Online to report their repairs. For people who had done so, they were asked further questions about the ease of use, any difficulties using the system and any suggestions to improve it. Those people who hadn't used the system were asked why and what would help them to use it.

We received 38 responses online and 9 paper responses which is a 9.4% response rate. The average time to complete the survey was 2:36 minutes and it was open from 19 June to 12 July 2025. 47% of responses had used the online reporting system and almost half of these had reported repairs online within the past six months.

Survey

When did you last report a repair using Housing Online?



41% of respondents had used the system within the past six months.

5.2 Demonstration and testing of the system

The lead officer provided a demonstration of how to access and use the system at the first panel meeting in May 2025. This provided a useful introduction for those who had not used Housing Online before. At this time the panel asked if they could use a test account to be able to explore the platform further, but this request was declined.

At the July 2025 meeting, a few tenants offered for the panel to view their accounts online to test parts of the repairs reporting system. The panel did not look beyond selecting a repair to ensure that they did not mistakenly request a repair on a tenants account. There was a certain amount of difficulty being able to access the accounts and share on the meeting screens, but this was eventually achieved. The process was worked through while testing out the guidance document provided by the lead officer.

5.3 Web trawl

There was no way of accessing other housing provider systems online as this needed registration and a correct address to be able to do so. A look at other housing provider websites was carried out instead to be able to compare the advice given when reporting repairs online.

5.4 TPAS Connect

A request was made to members of TPAS Connect to let the panel know about their experiences of online reporting systems for their housing providers. No response was received other than one person saying that their housing provider did not have an online repairs system.

5.5 Complaints

There had been no complaints about Housing Online for reporting repairs prior to the investigation being completed.

5.6 Meetings

Panel meetings took place between May and August 2025. These focussed on the information coming from the various different sources mentioned above.

6. Summary of Evidence

6.1 Use of the system

The Housing Online repairs system was introduced in November 2021. It forms part of an all-in-one solution combining multiple housing systems into one platform and providing a full 360-degree view.

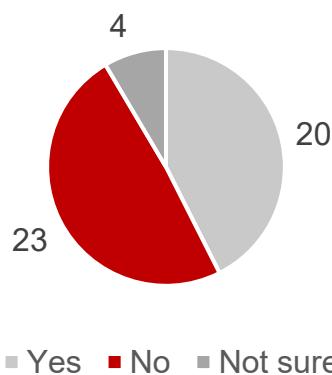
The current usage of the repairs reporting service is reported as 4,766 (8.63%) from a total of 55,190 repairs requested annually. This does not include emergency repairs, as these cannot be reported online. The breakdown by trade of the repairs received in 2024/25 is:

TRADE	ONLINE	TOTAL JOBS	%AGE
Plasterer	675	9078	7.44%
Floor tiler	50	590	8.47%
Bricklayer	153	1838	8.32%
Gas fitter	0	2	0.00%
Glazier	419	2448	17.12%
Ground works	101	574	17.60%
Heating engineer	0	0	0.00%
Joiner	1072	9403	11.40%
Labourer	0	329	0.00%
Plumber	1416	12701	11.15%
Roofers	675	2743	24.61%
Specialist	675	9078	7.44%

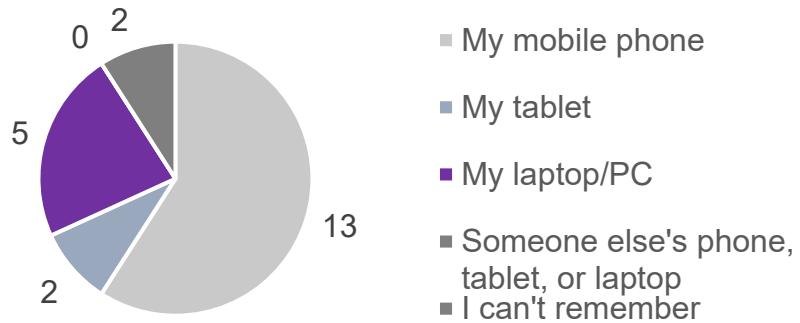
The trades that received the highest percentage of requests online as compared to telephone reporting were roofers, glaziers, and ground works, whereas most overall requests were for plumbers and joiners.

Survey

Do you use the online system to report any repairs that are needed to your home?

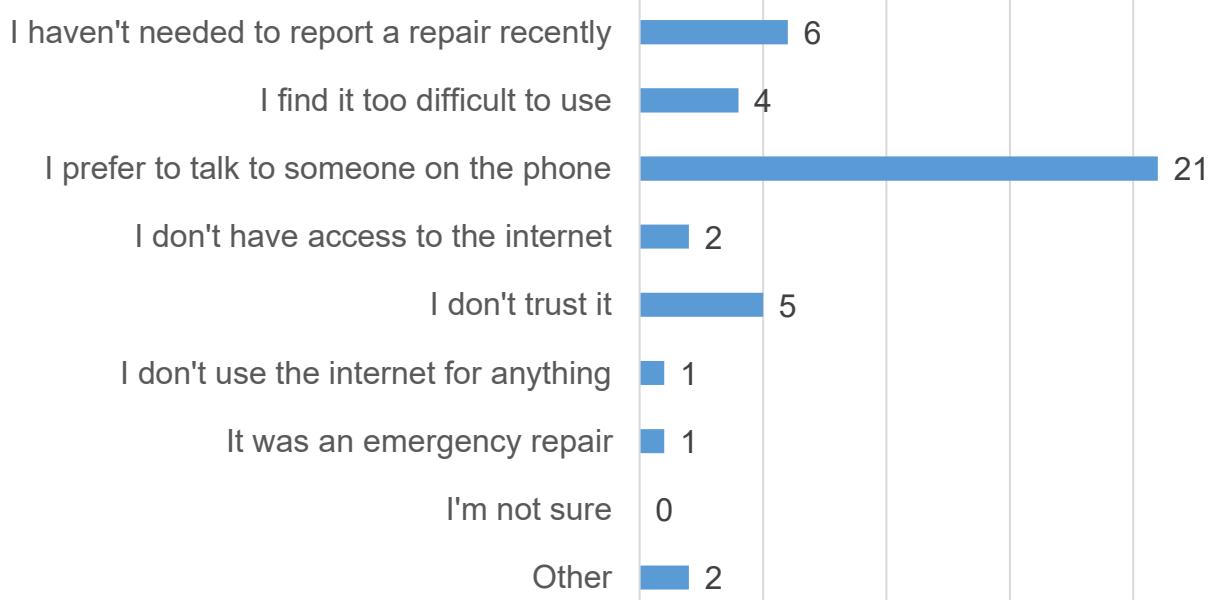


43% of respondents had used the system

What did you use to report the repair online?

Everybody who could remember used their own devices

59% used a phone to complete their online repair report.

Why don't you use the online system (tick all that apply):

Mainly (50%) just a preference to speak on the phone.

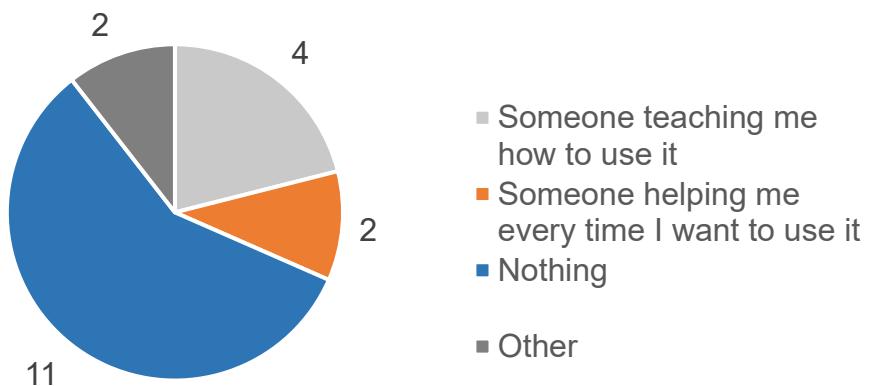
Not an access issue – only two people not having access to the internet and one other who doesn't use the internet for anything.

Five people (12%) don't trust the system.

Do you have any comments on why you don't use the online repairs reporting system (optional answer)?

From the responses received:

- 👤👤 Two people were unaware that the service existed.
- 👤👤👤 Three people had tried but were unable to access the system.
- 👤👤 Two people hadn't requested any repairs recently.
- 👤👤 Two people preferred to speak to a real person.
- 👤👤 Two people didn't trust the system (thought that it wouldn't work).
- 👤 One person was unable to use it due to a health condition.
- 👤 One person doesn't use the internet for anything.

What would help you to use the system?

Just 22% of respondents would accept help to use the system.

Other help:

- Having access to my account
- A leaflet explaining the services on offer and a brief guide to which to click on to get what I need.

PANEL VIEWS:

- The panel was surprised that the usage of online reporting of repairs was as low as 8.63% of all repairs. It was recognised that the council could save some money if more people used the system.
- It was interesting that 59% of online repairs are reported on a phone – there is a need for a ‘mobile-first’ approach for Housing Online and any future services.
- Panel members thought that it would be useful to carry out more promotion of the service and provide more guidance as some people either didn’t know it existed or were unable to access it. There was clearly some opportunity to boost the usage further.
- In particular, panel members thought that the provision of devices in places such as council buildings and libraries to allow people to complete a repairs request with support would build a lot of confidence for some tenants.
- The panel also thought that another opportunity for encouraging people to use the system would be during their initial sign-up meetings for their new homes. This would make online reporting more of a ‘norm’.
- On reflection, the panel would have liked to asked for the age of the people completing the survey to have an idea on the demographic of people using the service most.

Recommendation

Sign up

- Consider signing people up for Housing Online and showing them the repairs part of the system at their sign-up meeting.

Suggestions

Mobile friendly

When seeking a new platform for reporting repairs, ensure that it is suitably mobile phone app friendly.

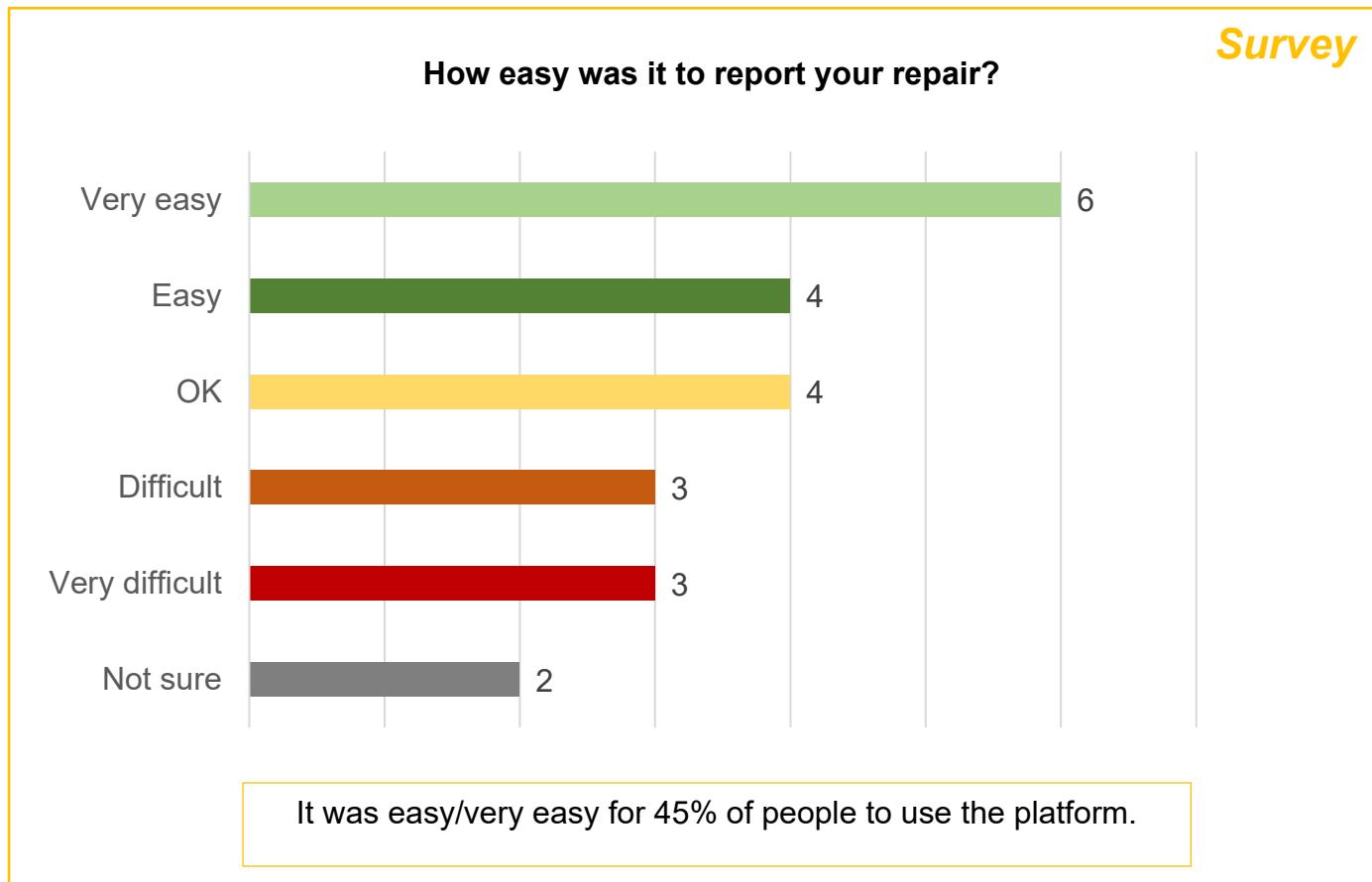
Promotion

Arrange for more promotion of the platform and potentially offer some support to people who would like to learn how to use the online reporting tool.

6.2 The process

The Programme Manager for the Housing Online service attended one of the panel meetings to provide a demonstration of how the platform should be used to report repairs online. It was confirmed that online reporting could not take place for either emergency repairs or for reporting damp and mould, both of which were outside the scope of this investigation. The timeline for operating the current online reporting system was a minimum of two years, after which consideration will be given to purchasing a new system.

Eight thousand (40%) tenants have signed up for Housing Online and the Customer Experience Board are promoting online repairs to try to increase this number.



The panel also carried out their own test of the platform using some of the panel members accounts.

Panel test findings:

At the test meeting, panel members found it difficult to get onto the platform; they were able to log into the accounts on Housing Online, but only into the reporting repairs section after numerous attempts.

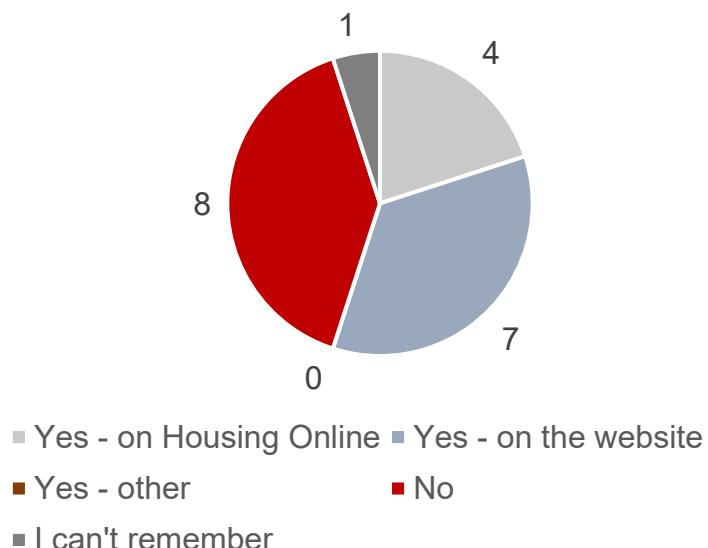
Guidance documents are available for Housing Online to be able to report a repair and to upload a document if required. The welcome screen of the repairs reporting pages also gives some guidance on:

- What is classed as an emergency repair and how to report these.
- Other non-emergency repairs that cannot be reported online, such as adaptations and minor fixings.
- Water supply contact numbers.
- Repairs that are the tenant's responsibility.

Similar guidance is provided on the council's website.

Survey

Did you follow any guidance to show you how to report a repair online?



50% used some guidance

45% managed to report their repair without guidance.

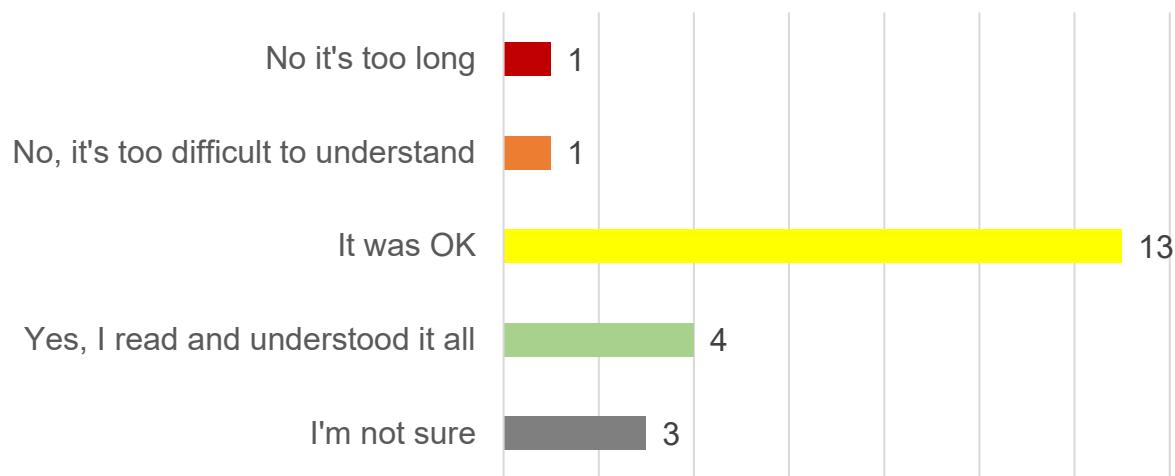
Panel test findings:

On the welcome screen, it was found that there was no mention of disabilities or age-related restrictions for tenants e.g. expecting an older person to change a high-level lightbulb. This was also not mentioned on the web page relating to the repairs reporting service.

The council website mentioned that tenants had the option of getting a quote from the council for any repairs that were the tenant's own responsibility.

It was suggested that the phrase '*can include but not limited to*' was not clear for everybody. It would be plainer language if it just said '*examples are*'. This appeared twice on the Emergency Repairs and Tenants' Responsibilities lists.

Was the opening page easy to understand?



77% found the opening page OK or easy to understand.

Comments:

The online portal to report a repair is absolutely useless - it's so difficult to use as someone who is quite confident on mobile phones.

There are some things that you can't report; like my fire alarm wouldn't stop beeping so my son had to take it down as I collapsed with exhaustion due to it going off when I tried to sleep.

The last two times I wanted to report online the page was unavailable. I had to telephone and was told you can report online; I told the operative the webpage did not work. On one occasion the operative told me it was down for the time being.

Panel test findings:

The test run by the panel during one of their meetings found the following issues with the platform:

Text

The ***Emergency Repairs list*** differed from other housing providers. The panel would have liked the list to include:

- Locked out of your home
- No heating/ hot water *in cold weather*
- Damaged door or window which has left your home unsecure.

Panel members felt that the list of emergency repairs had changed since the last time they viewed it, but that they had received no notification of this.

Other works

Other councils also included a message telling people how to report potential gas leaks to the National Gas Emergency Service.

The ***Tenants Responsibilities*** list should include:

- *Broken toilet seats*
- Replacement light bulbs (*unless an older person or disabled*)

This list was also not very clear around electrical sockets. One member of the panel had a damaged electrical socket replaced by the council, whereas another member had been told that it was their responsibility.

Pictures

- The title 'Gas' would be understood as gas safety. It would be better if it read 'gas appliances'.
- The 'Gas' section included vents, whereas this would be better as its own category.
- 'Plumbing' then 'taps' seems to be just stop taps, with other taps being under bathroom or kitchen pictures. It would be better to name this picture 'stop taps' or to move kitchen and bathroom taps under the same category.
- It would be useful to add an 'other' category for any repairs not listed.
- The flooring picture doesn't look like a floor.
- The drainage picture would be better showing pipes or similar.

PANEL VIEWS:

- ☛ The panel was concerned that six survey respondents (27%) found the platform difficult or very difficult to use.
- ☛ This was confirmed by the panel's own experience of testing the platform.
- ☛ During testing of the platform, panel members were not familiar with the list of Emergency Repairs and felt that it had changed since they last read the list.
- ☛ There was some concern that panel members were not aware of changes made to the emergency repairs list. It was also suggested that this list be reviewed in light of the lists used by other housing providers.
- ☛ Panel members felt strongly that some of the repairs listed for own responsibility should be made available for council completion when people were older or had physical disabilities with no family members or friends who could complete it on their behalf.
- ☛ The panel would also like to have seen an offer on the repairs platform for the council completing some works at a charge for people who couldn't carry out their own repairs.
- ☛ It was reassuring that over three quarters of tenants responding to the survey found the opening page useful.
- ☛ The panel was keen to make the platform easier to use by addressing the issues raised during their test.

Recommendations

Emergency repairs categories

- Regularly update tenants on any changes made to the emergency repairs categories list.

Tenant responsibilities

- Add to the tenant's responsibilities list that these depend on the tenant's age/ disability e.g. if able to replace lightbulbs safely
- Make it clear that there is an option to pay the council to carry out the repairs that are your own responsibility.

Suggestion

Pictures and wording

Review the pictures and wording used on the system in line with the findings of this report.

6.3 Time out

During discussions between panel members who had reported repairs online, it became clear that the biggest frustration was that the screen would time out while they were still trying to complete the process.

The lead officer informed the panel that Housing Online will time out after ten minutes of inactivity for security reasons; if the user continuously interacts with the system whilst booking the repair, it will not time out. This applies across all the council's online services. For the repairs reporting pages this provides an additional safeguard that the appointment slots are still available and haven't been booked by anyone else in the meantime.

There is no warning of this on the opening page for reporting repairs or the web pages. The only warning on the website refers to: '*When reporting repairs and making appointments, the webpage may go blank whilst the available appointment slots are loaded. This may take up to 60 seconds. Please do not exit the webpage*'. This warning also appears on screen saying that the system needs to connect to a separate platform to be able to book the appointment.

The only message about time out on the system is to inform the user that they have already been logged out and that they need to log back in.

Panel test findings:

The panel was not convinced that the time out always occurred at ten minutes, with some feeling that it was sooner than this on some occasions. It was also felt that it would be easy to leave the screen inactive for longer than ten minutes, if they were checking on the repair details or got distracted during the process.

There have been occasions when they have completed the form and arrived at the 'book appointment' button for it not to work.

There is no visible countdown of the time out on the screen when this happens. This clearly can be very frustrating.

PANEL VIEWS:

- ☛ The panel felt that more warnings during use could be given of the time out on the system to make sure that people do not become frustrated and disappointed by the Housing Online platform.
- ☛ It was agreed that completing the repairs report online without some inactivity in 10 minutes would be difficult for many people.
- ☛ During testing of the online repairs reporting system, it was found that there was no warning of this time out on the opening page.
- ☛ Panel members felt that the biggest frustration for those who had used the system was that the screen would time out as they were still trying to complete the process. This could be alleviated by increasing the time before losing your report and being able to save the details already entered.

☛ It was also felt that more people would use the platform if they had a positive experience of it, including not losing the entries that they had already made.

Recommendations

Time Out

- Extend the length of time before the online form times out **or** put a warning on the front page to let people know that it will time out if they don't keep working on the form.
- Make sure that there is a warning on the system telling people when the page is about to time out.

Save Option

- Have a 'save' option on the platform whilst adding details of repairs to prevent the need to start again each time.

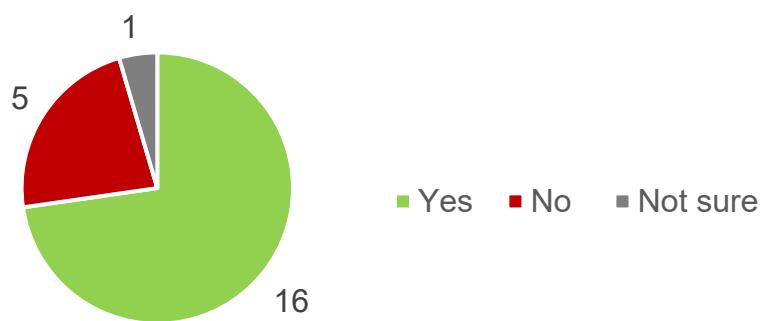
6.4 Appointments

Officers were of the view that all the repairs on the screen where images exist, will allow for an appointment to be booked; the only time the contractor will need to contact the customer direct is if there are no available appointments left to book at that time.

Availability

Survey

Did you book an appointment for your repair to be completed?



73% booked appointments

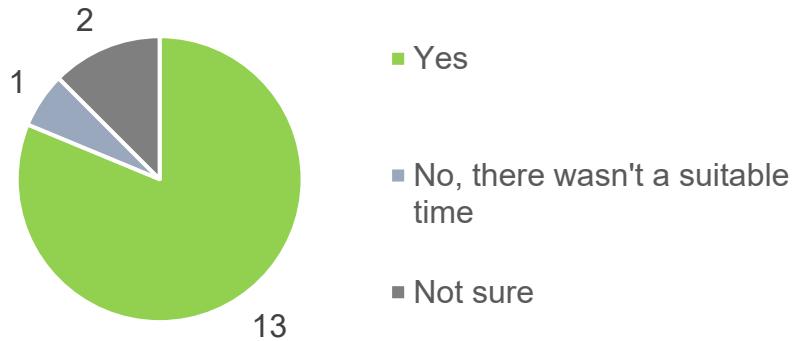
Panel test findings:

From the experience of the panel members using the system, appointments were only available in around 25-50% of cases.

The panel tested out a few repairs and several had no appointment on offer.

Survey

If you did book an appointment, was it a suitable day and time?

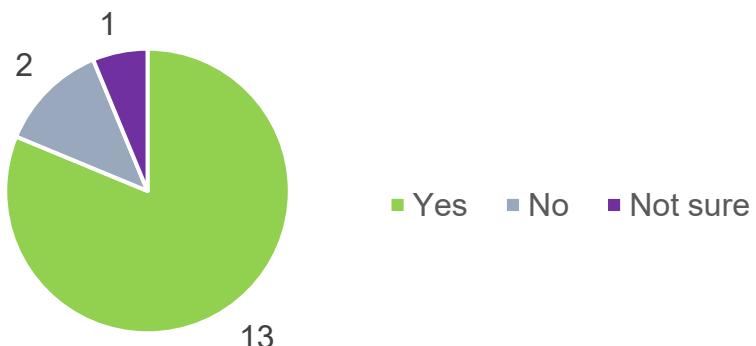


It was a suitable time and day for 81% of people

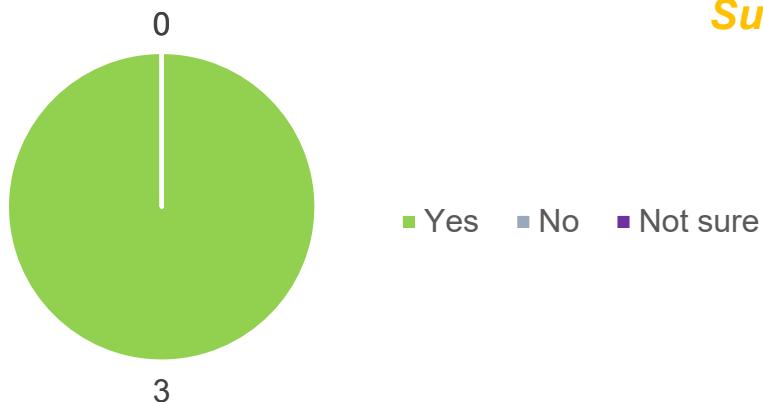
Confirmation of appointments

Survey

Did you receive a text or email to say when your appointment was?



81% of people said that they received a text or email to confirm their appointment.



100% of the people saying that they hadn't received an email or text to confirm their appointment said that they would have liked to.

Panel test findings:

No confirmation is received of appointments as standard from the Council. In some cases, the contractor will contact you directly by email, text or phone, but not in all instances. Confirmation texts and emails from contractors seemed to be used by Equans rather than Mears.

In many cases the only way to confirm what appointments you have pending is to log into the system and check the list of raised issues. In comparison to this, gas checks get a letter and a text message once arranged (not on this system).

Rearranging appointments

Panel test findings:

If you need to rearrange an appointment for any reason you are unable to do this on Housing Online; you need to phone the contact centre. This phone number is not displayed clearly on the system nor in any contractor confirmation notice.

There is a 'get in touch' link on the first page of the Housing Online system, but not in the repairs reporting section.

It was found that other councils had a link to a form that could be completed to notify the council that the appointment needed to be cancelled or changed.

PANEL VIEWS:

- ☛ It was reassuring that 73% of survey respondents had managed to book an appointment for their repairs, when the panel experience was much lower at around 25-50%.
- ☛ It was surprising that 81% of people responding to the survey said that they had received a text or email to confirm their appointment.
- ☛ Panel members agreed with the survey respondents in that everybody would like to receive some confirmation of the booking that they have made.
- ☛ The panel was disappointed that there is no text or email confirmation sent out for every appointment by the council and only in some cases by the provider.
- ☛ The panel found it concerning that the only way to view your appointments is by logging into Housing Online.
- ☛ More frustrating was that the only way to change or cancel an appointment was to phone the council rather than being able to do this online too. This seemed strange when we are trying to move towards increasing the use of digital services.

Recommendations

Number of appointments

- Review how many appointments are available on the online platform, with a view to increasing this number as necessary.

Notification of appointment

- Provide a consistent way of notifying people of appointments across both providers. Make it so that you don't have to log into your account to view your appointments.

Cancelling appointments

- Provide a way to cancel or change appointments that are made on the online system without the need for phoning the council.

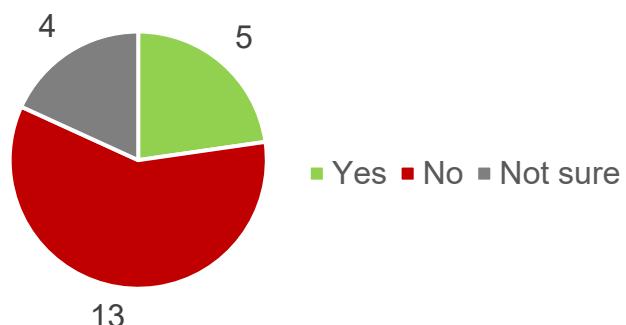
6.5 Summary of repairs

On the landing page of the reporting repairs system there is a summary of previously reported jobs, with the date reported, job description, and job status. There is an actions button next to each repair to allow you to view the details.

Council officers advised that the list is archived every 90 days, so that the tenant can only see the last three months of repairs. This is to avoid the system from becoming cluttered. The archive of repairs requests is kept by the council on their Council Housing Management System, going back to November 2021, when the system went live. It was noted that if the Council moves to a new system supplier, the service may decide not to retain all the historic information in line with Housing retention policy for repairs.

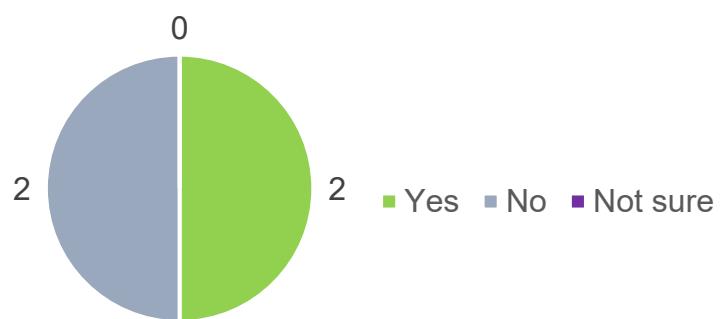
Survey

Did you use the system to track your repair i.e. see what was happening with it?



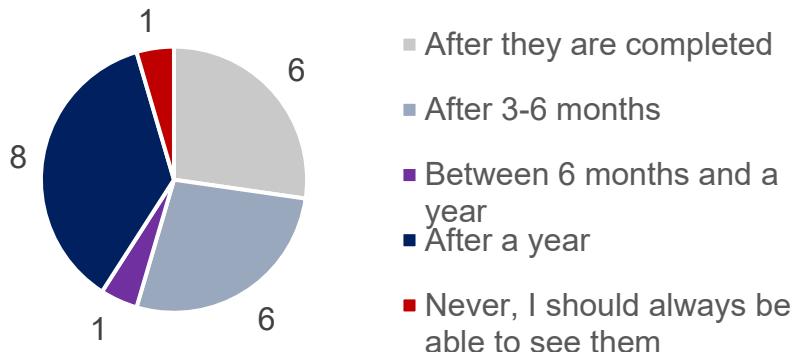
23% of people tracked their repair on the system.

If yes, did this work well?



Tracking did not work well for 50% of the respondents.

After some time, details of your repairs are removed from Housing Online. When do you think details of your repairs should be removed?



Most people (36%) would prefer their repairs to remain on the system for a year.

Panel test findings:

From the panel members only three had used the online system for reporting repairs. As part of the test, these people looked at their online accounts to check the summary.

One panel member had recently moved to a new property so didn't have many repairs on their system, and another had not reported a repair for over a year. However, another panel member had repairs listed that went back to January 2024, (and one was planned to be completed in 2050).

PANEL VIEWS:

- ☛ It was disappointing that 50% of survey respondents felt that the repairs tracking did not work well for them.
- ☛ The panel was concerned that 90 days of repairs being listed may not be sufficient.
- ☛ In particular, if tenants wanted to challenge the work that has been completed; there is no proof available to them that they did indeed report that repair.
- ☛ The general consensus from panel members and the survey was that repairs details should remain on the system for longer, at least six months, but mostly for a year.

Recommendations

Repairs log

- Extend the period of time for repairs to remain on the platform to 12 months to allow for people to refer back to them if there are any complaints or follow-ups needed. Or provide an archive record for tenants as well as for staff.

6.6 Customer experience

Survey

Do you have any suggestions for making the system better (please add your comments below)?

No, I think the system works well.

No, the reporting of a repair system has been easy to use as it is for me thank you.

A good GUI makes all the difference. Drop down menus for each click box giving options to further the requested information. An inclusive colour scheme for dyslexic users; Large print options; A save function if unable to complete; Keyword search.

Have a section for Snagging Jobs. This should then be automatically highlighted as such and the Contractor should make contact directly. My issue was my heating. I had to continuously inform during numerous calls from RMBC the address of my property. Then on the day the Engineer was sent to the Plot Number. This caused anguish to both myself and the tenant who was understandably very surprised as she wasn't expecting an engineer.

The website does not appear to have been working to report repairs, I have had to telephone during the past year.

Actually be able to BOOK repairs, I can't even navigate the website to file a repair.

Panel test findings:

It was noted that most of the panel members who had tried the Housing Online system to report repairs had found it too difficult and had reverted back to phoning the Customer Service line. In particular, they had preferred the previous system of using a webform to report repairs.

Officers notified the panel that the webform system had been replaced as this was causing more administrative work for colleagues. They were receiving the webforms and then manually raising repairs requests, slowing down the process of booking appointments. It was felt to be inefficient.

They also confirmed that it is proposed that all council platforms are to introduce a new programme which allows people to select accessibility tools and be able to use the platform more easily.

PANEL VIEWS:

- ☛ The panel were disappointed that the use of the webform for reporting repairs was no longer available but understood the reasons why. It was concerning though that this would mean that more people would need to phone the council to report repairs.
- ☛ The views of panel members reinforced the need for some targeted marketing and perhaps learning opportunities to make tenants more comfortable about using the platform.
- ☛ The suggestions of improving the repairs reporting system by making it more accessible such as adjusting the colour scheme, providing large print, and having a save function were considered to be very helpful.

7. Recommendations

Priority ranking	Recommendation	Page Number
A	<p>Sign up</p> <p>Consider signing people up for Housing Online and showing them the repairs part of the system at their sign-up meeting.</p>	<p>Pages</p> <p>11-14</p>
B	<p>Emergency repairs categories</p> <p>Regularly update tenants on any changes made to the emergency repairs categories list.</p>	<p>Pages</p> <p>15-19</p>
C	<p>Tenant responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Add to the tenant's responsibilities list that these depend on the tenant's age/ disability e.g. if able to replace lightbulbs safely. ➤ Make it clear that there is an option to pay the council to carry out the repairs that are your own responsibility. 	<p>Pages</p> <p>15-19</p>
D	<p>Time Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Extend the length of time before the online form times out or put a warning on the front page to let people know that it will time out if they don't keep working on the form. ➤ Make sure that there is a warning on the system telling people when the page is about to time out. 	<p>Pages</p> <p>20-21</p>
E	<p>Save Option</p> <p>Have a 'save' option on the platform whilst adding details of repairs to prevent the need to start again each time.</p>	<p>Pages</p> <p>20-21</p>

F	Number of appointments Review how many appointments are available on the online platform, with a view to increasing this number as necessary.	Pages 21-24
G	Notification of appointment Provide a consistent way of notifying people of appointments across both providers. Make it so that you don't have to log into your account to view your appointments.	Pages 21-24
H	 Cancelling appointments Provide a way to cancel or change appointments that are made on the online system without the need for phoning the council.	Pages 21-24
I	Repairs log Extend the period of time for repairs to remain on the platform to 12 months to allow for people to refer back to them if there are any complaints or follow-ups needed. Or provide an archive record for tenants as well as for staff.	Pages 25-26
Suggestions		
1	Pictures and wording Review the pictures and wording used on the system in line with the findings of this report.	Pages 18-19
2	Promotion Arrange for more promotion of the platform and potentially offer some support to people who would like to learn how to use the online reporting tool.	Pages 11-14
3	Mobile friendly When seeking a new platform for reporting repairs, ensure that it is suitably mobile phone app friendly.	Pages 12-14

8. Glossary of terms

Adaptations: – Changes made to a home to improve how tenants with disabilities can use it safely, such as grab rails or stair lifts.

Appointments: Times for visits by contractors to carry out repair work.

Archive Record: A stored history of past repair requests.

Critical Friend: A role of the Tenant Scrutiny panel to offer helpful feedback and challenge to the Council.

Customer Experience Board: A group within the Council promoting tenant engagement and digital service usage, including Housing Online.

Emergency Repairs: Urgent repairs that pose a risk to health or safety, such as gas leaks or broken locks.

Escalation Process: How to raise concerns to people who are higher managers if you're not happy with the first response.

Feedback: Comments that help to improve services.

Housing Online: The Council's digital platform for tenants to carry out many tasks online.

Investigation: A structured look and review of services and issues.

Lettable Standard: Standard used by the Council to ensure homes ready for re-letting are in a good state.

Methodology: How you carry out the investigation.

Mobile-First Approach: Making sure that online services are good for people using mobile phones.

Own Responsibility Repairs: Repairs that tenants have to carry out themselves, such as replacing light bulbs or toilet seats.

Panel Members: Tenant representatives who take part in investigations to improve council services for all tenants and residents.

Recommendations: Suggested changes or improvements based on what is found.

Repairs Log: A summary of recent repair requests on the Housing Online platform.

Rotherham Federation: An organisation supporting tenant involvement and community empowerment across Rotherham.

Snagging Jobs: Unfinished jobs in a new home.

Survey Response Rate: The number of people that filled the survey in from all the people it was sent to.

Tenant Scrutiny Panel: A group of tenants who look at council services on behalf of other tenants and suggest things that could be better to the council.

Terms of Reference: A document stating why something will be done and what limits will be used.

Time Out: – Automatic logout from a system after a certain amount of time to help to keep people's details safe.

TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service): A UK body supporting tenant engagement and best practice in housing services.

TPAS Connect: A network across the UK for people involved in tenant engagement.

Trial Period: A set time for testing something out.

Webform: A form that can be filled in online to let people know about something.

9. References

1. Housing Act 1985 c.68
2. Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 c.70
3. Secure Tenant of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulation 1994, SI 1994 No. 133
4. Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 c.34
5. Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 c.36
6. Safety and Quality Standard Consumer Standards (April 2024); Regulator of Social Housing 2024.

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