

# **New Online Repairs Service – Authentication and Tracking Resident Involvement Report**

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## Report Purpose

The majority of Southern Housing Groups' day to day repairs are contracted to 3 key maintenance providers; Southern Maintenance Service (SMS), DW and Wates.

We started working with the IT Project Team to support them in involving residents in improving the Groups' digital offer to them. This evolved into the current Online Repairs Service project. The Project Team decided to focus on the Online Repairs Service following feedback from residents and staff about the need to improve the current methods of reporting repairs; by telephone, email or using an online report form.

To enable repairs to be scheduled remotely, the service needed to focus on 1 - 2-hour plumbing, electrical and carpentry repairs undertaken by SMS, DW and Wates.

Since December 2019 we have been working with our involved residents on an improved digital option for residents and staff to report repairs to the contractors.

The key aim was to offer residents an online channel to report, schedule and track repairs to their properties and report repairs to communal areas.

This report details the feedback provided for the 'authentication and tracking of repairs' at the resident focus group in December 2020. The resident recommendations were also shared with the IT Project Team the following day to enable them to be discussed with the developer.

## Consultation Themes

The first theme was to ensure that residents testing the authentication process during the focus group could do easily by using email or text. The authenticator sends a code to the residents' email or mobile number to be entered online as part of the security process.

When logging in to the system, if residents want to review a scheduled repair to track its progress or to reschedule, they need to use the authentication to ensure only the resident that raised the repair can access the personal details entered.

Repairs in residents' homes can be tracked, rescheduled or cancelled. Communal repairs can be viewed by all residents in the block where the report has been made for, but not tracked or rescheduled.

Another theme was to make sure that the tracking of a repair could be understood by residents with mixed digital abilities.

The New Online Repairs Service has been designed to be easy to follow, easy to read and to enable users of different digital abilities to be able to access the service.

## Consultation Methodology.

This report sets out the findings of the review undertaken with residents in December's 2020 focus group.

Residents involved in the previous phases of testing of the New Online Repair Service were invited to test the 'Authentication and Tracking' functions.

Residents were invited to take part remotely by email, over the telephone or by Zoom with a Customer Involvement Officer only or take part in a Focus Group with the IT Project Team present also.

For this stage we asked residents to provide details of the digital equipment and mobile number they would be using to access the links to the test screens and receive an authentication text. This enabled the IT Project Team to ensure that the New Online Repairs Service was accessible and useable to all residents.

The IT Project Team presented the Authenticator and the tracking application while some of the residents tried accessing the same, using a link sent to them prior to the focus group.

Time was given at the end of each screen to enable questions and feedback to be shared.

The Customer Involvement Team were aware that the digital users themselves would each have different technical skill sets and different needs from the New Online Repair Service. Our involved residents had knowledge to provide some feedback on behalf of non-digital residents that were unable to be involved face to face to provide technical support.

The Customer Involvement Team were able to facilitate the focus group by Zoom during a week day evening.

In line with standard research practice, and due to the numbers of residents involved, the findings of this review group cannot be viewed as providing representative feedback on the views of all the Group's residents. These results do provide an insight into the views and opinions of residents.

## Respondent profile

This information has been gained to help monitor inclusivity of residents participating in the project.

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Tenures</b>	<b>Regions</b>
<b>Phase 4 Winter 2020</b> Reschedule and Track repairs	2 Male 2 Female	3 General Needs 1 Shared Owner	1 North 2 South 1 Sheltered

No residents responded to take part by email.

One resident took part in a one to one Zoom meeting and also took part in the focus group.

## Consultation findings

**Residents within the focus group were invited to share their feedback on each page of the New Online Repairs Service. We have shared their findings below:**

### Login page

- The first screen says, 'report a repair' and the second screen says 'track or report a repair'
- When starting to enter our log in details, can the field be a neutral colour and only turn red if the details are wrong?

### Track a repair page

- When you wait for the loading of this screen, 'Cannot find repair' is displayed at the top. If a resident is in a hurry or has a pc/poor connection, then would it take longer to change screens. Residents may give up if they think that the tracking function is not working
- The tracker did not enable me to check on the repair I had just raised. It did not appear on the tracking screen when I checked after entering a new repair

### Authentication process

- When selecting either phone or email as my authentication option- both turned green. It would help residents if only the option chosen turned green to confirm their selection

### Authentication page

- All of the box is in red – it may make a resident think you have done something wrong as opposed to the pin writing itself just being in red until you have entered the pin
- I liked that the box turned green from red when the pin was accepted
- Once the pin has been accepted, I would have preferred to have a welcome message, 'hello,' to confirm that I had passed security
- It would help if like a bank, the screen asks if it is 'you' and if not, to call the housing association

### Pending repairs page

- The screen says 'Fri 11th December - AM (open)' next to the repair. It needs to explain what is meant by 'open.' It sounds as though it is terminology used in an office, but not something you would use at home. 'Pending' and 'booked' have previously been used as phrasing for the same.

### Completed repairs page

- The screen for completed repairs says 'Mon 30th November 2020 (completed)' - I liked this

### Contact details page

- I liked when reporting a new repair that the phone number was automatically inserted (moving from track a repair to add) - but I would want my number to be flagged/coloured to show it has already been entered
- Communal repairs reporting - contractors expect residents to help them gain entry to some blocks. Some residents are concerned that by needing to leave contact details this will continue or further contractors' expectations. Not all blocks have trades codes or buttons. Access needs to be arranged through Southern Housing Group, not the residents

### Authentication messages received to phone or email

- The system needs to confirm what has been reported alongside the appointments sent to your phone or email - what happens if you have reported more than one repair? (and cannot remember what repair was reported for what day, including communal repairs)

### Buttons and Links feedback

- I would like the 'Can't find a repair' link to be placed higher than 'Finished' button (as the link may be missed)
- I like the increase in size of text/the text being bolder

### Feedback Page

- A welcome message to feedback page would be better
- Where it says 'I would recommend this service other SHG residents' Add in the word 'to' other SHG residents
- The shorter feedback page is an improvement
- The page could be improved by adding 'Have we answered all your questions? Is there anything else you would like to add? Click here'

There was not time to review the 'Feedback Page' during the focus group. A member of the focus group also gave feedback the day beforehand.

Any other feedback

- Positive:

Praise was given for the look and feel of the New Online repairs Service by residents

The updates, (undertaken following feedback from users in the Southern Maintenance Service area and involved residents testing the system), looked good

Being able to change the language of the words on the screen was a positive – however, the placement of the language drop-down box was not obvious until shown to residents

The process, (to access the tracking of a repair), is straight forward

The process is very easy to follow and made very simple to help residents raise a repair

Having a link to the service from the Groups' web page is a good idea

- Negative:

Tenures – the system needs to inform owners/shared owners/leaseholders that they can raise communal repairs but not personal repairs due to the responsibilities under the different tenures

Need to make types of server information - chrome, edge and Firefox visual on web page or share via communications out to residents.

Red error box when need to enter pin - too much red writing and outline to box.

- Other comments:

Need to take non-digital residents on journey - this is an added tool not a replacement for using service centre

Need to ensure residents are aware what can be raised as a repair - SMS, DW, Wates only. Questions were raised about other repairs, such as lifts

One resident would like to be involved in the quick test of the rescheduling and cancelling of repairs. No words or screen changes are planned for this process. However, the resident would like to test the process through to conclusion

Residents would like to know when the New Online Repair Service will go 'live' in DW and Wates maintenance areas and how all residents will be made aware of when it is available



**We asked residents that have taken part in any of the phases for the New Online Repairs Service to provide their feedback to the following questions:**

At the time of this report being written, only residents taking part in the Authentication and Tracking of the repairs focus group had responded. All residents taking part had access to email.

- What did you enjoy most during this project?

‘Communication and meeting people’

‘I really enjoyed learning peoples’ points of views and ideas, especially those that were different from my ideas, thoughts or concerns.’

‘The chance to see what was coming and influence it.’

‘The opportunity to speak directly to IT people while testing the new system’

- What did you enjoy the least during this project?

‘Nothing.’

‘There is really nothing. If there was something, then it is really negligible because I really can’t think of anything.’

‘Answering the questions!’

- What would have improved your experience during this project?

‘I had mechanical issues, but I persevered. And I did mention an easier way to get connected.’

‘To get paid for taking part’

‘Perhaps to have access to an offline ‘copy’ of the repair reporting procedure before each online session, so that we could recap all the steps/choices/variables existent in the system. For Example, I don’t remember if there is a space for comments on attendance/completed jobs/incomplete jobs requiring further visits’

- What notice period would help you take part?

**2 Weeks minimum** – 3 residents

**One month** – 1 resident



**Other:**

1 days' notice in emergencies. 8 days' notice (in general) to 2 weeks' notice depending on the emergency

- Would the notice period change when taking part in online or face to face focus groups?

The responses did not change. All residents responding had access to email and attended the focus group.

- What technical problems did you experience during the project?

Getting connected for Zoom meeting

Incorrect password provided – link to test portal

- What assistance would help you with technical problems during similar future projects?

I like to prepare in advance, and you cannot log on early (to the test links)

I feel confident that I would not need any further assistance and that the assistance I received and the programs and methods I used are simple enough for me to understand and use

Being able to phone and get help from a person

- Any other feedback?

'It was a fun and good project and it was nice to see the things implemented over time and see the projects progression and in the end, it looked very good and professional. Nice work.'



## Report summary

The key outcomes have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

The IT Project Team were keen to ensure residents were involved in the final phase of this project. The external developer was working to make changes to the system following previous feedback provided by the involved residents, in addition to ongoing feedback received from residents using the limited service 'live' in the Southern Maintenance Service (SMS) area.

The IT Project Team needed to gain residents' feedback in December 2020 and were waiting for further information from the developers, Active Housing, in November 2020.

Residents received a 'Save a Date' for the final phase of the New Online Repairs Portal (Authentication and Tracking) and the Customer Portal prior to invitations with full consultation content being available to share. It was not possible to meet with non-digital residents due to guidance for Covid-19.

The IT Project Team are working with the Southern 360 (Community Investment Team) to explore how Non-Digital residents can be supported to get online if they would like to.

They are also looking at how to promote the New Online Repairs Service and new Customer Portal, including using existing email addresses and mobile phone numbers provided by residents to the Groups' customer recording system. They are considering sharing information when other communications are provided – such as a Service Charge letter. However, the IT Project Team are aware not every resident or tenure receives their Service Charge letter at the same time.

The teams' agreed to split a single focus group into 2 for both projects to avoid residents being asked to attend an online focus group twice in the same week. This ensured at least 2 weeks' notice was provided to residents, while avoiding the last week before Christmas when residents' availability was usually lower.

The delayed communications did mean that the number of residents able to take part could only be confirmed on the first day of the consultation week.

On the evening of the focus group it was found that an insufficient text allowance was available in addition to residents experiencing a problem with the email version of the authentication. Due to residents proactively trying the authenticators prior to the focus group start time, the IT Project Team were able to overcome the mobile authenticator issue and asked all residents to use this method.

With a lower number of residents taking part in this phase of the New Online Repair Service consultation, it was important to capture the feedback of all the residents invited to understand their unavailability. A survey was shared with residents that got involved in any of the New Online Repairs Service stages.

At the time of this report being written, only residents involved in the Authentication and Tracking of the repairs focus group had responded. The same residents may have been unavailable for all involvement at this time.

From the residents that did take part in the survey, there were a mixture of responses from one requiring notice of a month and others stating that 2 weeks' notice was required to take part as a minimum.

From the range of Customer Involvement Projects undertaken, we have learnt the following when inviting residents to a consultation:

The greater amount of notice given to residents in advance of a project enables

- a) The different ways residents can be notified of a project and be involved.
- b) The number of residents taking part increases
- c) A wider representation of residents (including non-digital residents when possible) with reasonable requests for adjustments can be involved

The feedback from the focus group for the Authentication and Tracking of a repair was united. This suggests a larger number of residents taking part would likely provide similar feedback.

Residents enjoyed the process within the focus groups and one resident suggested less questions would be beneficial. When looking at question formats with Resident Reviewers on other projects, feedback suggested the amount of questions required, depends on the level of involvement of a project.

For the Online Repairs Service, feedback was gathered about the readability, look and feel and accessibility to each page of system to enable the IT Project Team to consider changes with the developer. Some discussions are left 'open' to avoid too many direct questions.

## Recommendations

These recommendations have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

- **Consider how information is shared outside the online repairs service to help residents (including those of different tenures) understand what repairs can be reported**

Feedback:

This feedback will be shared with the communications team for consideration on the web page.

- **Consider the following suggestions for the Login Page:**
  - a) Enable the first screen to read 'report or track a repair'
  - b) Use a neutral colour for the login details – only use red to indicate an error

Feedback:

The word 'next' has been used to replace 'report a repair' on the first page.

The login details now only go 'red' when details have not been correctly entered.

- **Consider enabling residents to test links prior to a focus group to feel comfortable with the time given during a focus group**

Feedback:

Customer Involvement Team:

For technical assistance with Zoom, a half hour technical window is given prior to the start of the focus group.

Where possible, we will pre-arrange test sessions prior to the start of a project by pre-arrangement. A mobile number is usually provided by the Customer Involvement Team on the agenda.

For the authentication and tracking focus group, there was a shorter notice period to share the actual content of the consultation with residents. This led to a 'save a date' email with full details being shared together with links nearer to the consultation. Some residents have experienced difficulties in accessing Zoom invites in attachments. We will look to share the Zoom links within the body of emails also.

### IT Project Team:

The test screens provided by the IT Project Team are not worked on by the developer during the consultation week. The test data and systems are set up on a temporary basis. For this phase of the project, the authenticator needed a system which enabled emails and texts to give access to residents in a test environment.

The mobile text credits had run out at the time of the focus group and the emails went into a holding place. The IT Project Team overcame the mobile text authenticator problem during the half hour arranged before each focus group for any resident experiencing problems.

To avoid two focus groups being held close together prior to Christmas, one split focus group took place. This gave less time to the sessions. However, the IT Project Team were very pleased with the useful feedback residents were able to provide in the time provided.

- **Consider the following changes:**

Changing the holding message while the page is loading. 'Can't find a repair' suggests that the repair cannot be found instead of the server trying to find the repair. The delay with this message in place may prompt residents to contact the Service Centre.

### Feedback:

This is a feature that is part of the developers' product that is provided to other Housing Associations also. At this time, the recommendation has not been able to be taken forward, however, through further testing, we are aware that the 'live' version is faster than the 'test' version which means the 'can't find a repair' message should not appear on the screen for so long.

On the Pending Screen – change the word from 'Open' next to the date of the repair to 'pending.'

### Feedback:

This recommendation has been agreed to. The word 'open' has now been changed to 'pending.'

Add a welcome message to the Authenticator screen to confirm the name on the screen is the person who has logged in.

### Feedback:



We are limited to the changes that can be undertaken due to the product purchased and used by other housing associations.

- **Consider checking if the raising of a repair not appearing in the tracker function is a test environment error or a time delay to the New Online Repairs Service**

Add a message to let residents know when their repairs will be ready to be tracked/rescheduled if the delay to the repair appearing in the tracker is not an error within the test environment

Feedback:

After raising a repair, you click on the 'back to start' button to re-enter your details to activate the tracking option. A resident is unlikely to want to track a repair instantly but even if they did, testing shows that the repair is instantly available.

- **Consider increasing the period of notice given to residents for User Testing projects with additional time to test links shared with residents**

Feedback:

The time available is dependent on the developers needs to progress a project.

The IT Project Team prepare the test session by setting up the residents' telephone numbers, the links and the test screens.

When a Q and A focus group is arranged only, less time is required by the IT Project Team, that would give a greater notice period for residents.

If we worked with say 5 agreed users and a wider Q and A at the end of the focus group for everyone else, this would enable a longer period of notice for invitations to residents.

For test links only, we will be able to consider a longer engagement period in future, depending on the timeline we have with the developer.

- **Consider scheduling a review of the New Online Repairs Service a year on reaching out to wider involved residents, including current non-digital residents**

#### Feedback:

We will consider after Covid-19 the benefit of reaching out to non-digital residents where a fair number in one location would like to learn about the New Online Repair Service but are not currently digitally enabled.

In agreement with the Customer Involvement Team, most user experience sessions will be conducted online to enable residents from all different locations to be involved in a focus group.

## What happens next?

Thank you for reading this report. This report is a summary of the feedback received from residents regarding the project and at this time has not been shared with them.

The Customer Involvement Team are committed to giving feedback directly to the residents who took part in this consultation and to enable us to do this could you please ensure, as the project lead, the feedback covers the following:

- How you have addressed each recommendation and if not supported why this is the case.

Each recommendation has been addressed.

The 'Can't find a repair' holding message while the system searches, only experiences a noticeable delay on the test version. The message is standard across the developers' portals for other housing associations and is unable to be changed. As explained, this should not pose a problem on the 'live' version.

Some of the recommendations are outside of our control due to the overall product being provided for other organisations also.

We will share the feedback about communications outside of the new online repairs service with the Communications Team.

- What changes have you made due to resident's feedback?

We have extended the timescale to invite residents to the next stage of the wider review of the Customer Portal to a month.



Where registration is needed for future testing of systems, we will work with the Customer Involvement Team to limit the number of 'live' residents testing the system but will involve a greater number in a Question and Answer session. This will reduce the amount of preparation time by the IT Project Team prior to a focus group and increase the period of notice to residents taking part overall.

The word 'next' has been used to replace 'report a repair' on the first page.

The login details now only go 'red' when details have not been correctly entered.

- What will you be doing differently following this consultation?

As above

- What is the timeline for the changes to be implemented?

All changes agreed have been undertaken.

The cancelling and rescheduling of a repair will be reviewed by the resident interested on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The residents in the DW maintenance service area will have access to the New Online Repair Service in spring 2021.

- If it is a policy, procedure, strategy review please include the timeline for approval process.

Not applicable to this project.

Each project will be reviewed, one year on, to see what impact this project has had following on from the outcomes.