

Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) scrutiny review report – Digital Services

Reason for topic

The Audit and Risk Committee has agreed a three-year programme for scrutiny reviews from 2022-2025. The programme was adopted following consultation with staff and customers (including the Customer Scrutiny Panel). One of the topics that has been confirmed for review in 2024/25 is digital services. This was a scrutiny review proposed by Rooftop colleagues. As digital technology has moved on greatly, it is timely to review this topic. The ICT Strategy is being reviewed by the Head of Digital and ICT during quarter 4 2024/25 and the CSP members will explore how their recommendations can tie in with this review.

Objectives

- To review if the existing customer portal, app and the website are user friendly and fit for purpose. Specifically, this review will also look at how Rooftop has handled the effects of digital exclusion with some customers.
- To review whether all customers are being treated fairly and equitably.
- To review whether value for money is being achieved for Rooftop and its customers.

Methods

The methods used as part of the review were as follows:

- Desk top review.
- Interview relevant Heads of Service and other colleagues involved in digital services.
- Interview customers via surveys.
- Meet with staff at similar organisations to compare their approach to digital services.
- Review the state of the art and current practice within digital services.

Desktop review

- Performance information including customer satisfaction results.
- Relevant policies and procedures, including any covering reports leading to adoption.
- Review compliance with current data security policies, procedures and legislation.

Review Approach

With the assistance of Matthew Stratta, Business Analyst, we developed a Digital Services survey which was sent out to customers with a valid email address on QL. 920 residents responded, with 86% of those customers using a smartphone for their internet usage. We also carried out an in house exercise using a smartphone to navigate the Rooftop Housing website. Please see appendix 1 for results and screen prints.

Interviews

As part of the review, we interviewed Stuart Hitchman (Head of Digital and ICT); Kerry Castle (Business Applications Manager); Clare Breward (Communications Manager).

We also interviewed several representatives of fellow Housing Associations as part of a best practice review: Gill Mooney (Head of Customer Engagement at Community Housing); Simon Higgins (Director of Digital Services at Green Square Accord); Hazel Edwards (Head of Customer Voice and Value at The Wrekin Housing Group); Martyn Hale (Operations Director at Trent and Dove).

Findings

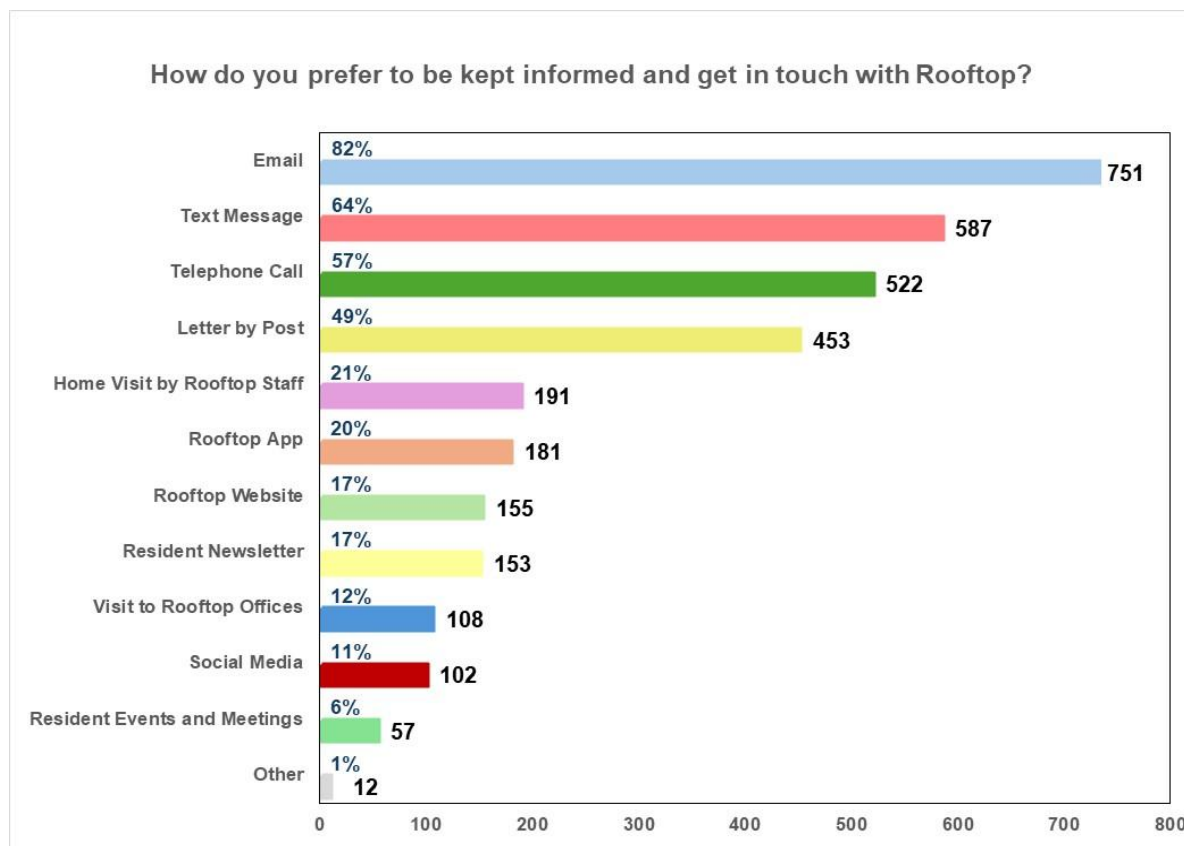
The Head of Digital and ICT was very helpful with his insight into the current website and Aaeron QL housing management system, explaining that the current suppliers were under review and also discussing possible future development.

The Business Applications Manager provided a thorough explanation of the app and informed us of new developments being looked into in the coming months.

The representatives from other housing associations provided a broad and relatively differing picture of their digital services provision.

Customer Feedback

Survey results demonstrated no clear preference for a single communication channel.



As such, it could be reasoned that customers typically engage with multiple channels of communication, and that their preference may be determined by the formality or complexity of their interaction with Rooftop. In noting that different customers have different preferences for engaging with Rooftop's services, the panel was keen to explore how no customers are disadvantaged, whether they prefer to access our services digitally or using more traditional methods, such as by phone or in person.

Our Recommendations

1. 86% of the survey respondents said that they use a smartphone to access the internet. Therefore, we recommend that the Rooftop website is optimised to smartphone users. Currently it is very difficult and slow to access the website using a smartphone. Please see appendix 1 for demonstrations of the difficulties encountered.
2. Clear, concise and up to date identification and details of the group of customers who do not have access to/use the internet, and therefore require print copies of pertinent information.
3. Identify and formulate an up to date customer contact list for use by all when sending out information – an incident occurred whereby deceased residents appeared on a contact list.
4. Confirm that Rooftop is complying to GDPR regarding data, and ensure that QL is regularly updated and checked for “Golden Data”.
5. Look into the option of Rooftop providing training on smartphones and laptops. Community Housing have run successful schemes. Platform (formerly Fortis) are currently offering digital training. The CSP has details of volunteers who will be willing to assist.
6. Ensure that the Rooftop website is up to date and relevant. It has been noted that it is currently showing the old Twitter symbol, not the current X symbol.
7. CSP carried out a mystery shopping exercise. It found 51 minutes call waiting for repairs, and the phone message says you may find it quicker to use our online service. This should be extended to say however if this is not for you please stay on the phone, or offer customers a callback service. When the call was answered, the Repairs Officer did not ask the CSP member to confirm or update their contact details (phone and email). Can we have a time estimate for waiting on phone lines?