



Evidencing Equal Outcomes in Housing Repairs & Maintenance

A self-assessment toolkit for social landlords in Wales

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Introduction



Introduction

Aims

This toolkit looks at the equality impact of Housing Repairs and Maintenance and forms the second part of our Equal Outcomes series which is designed to provide practical advice and information on equality issues to practitioners in the social housing sector.

The toolkit can help you:

- explore the impact of Repairs and Maintenance policies and practices on diverse groups
- identify and address risks and inform self-assessments required under the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations in Wales (as amended in 2014)
- meet the requirements of the Equality Act's general public sector equality duty
- improve and deliver more appropriate services
- tackle discrimination, promote equality and lead to more inclusive and cohesive communities
- improve customer satisfaction
- collect evidence for Equality Impact Assessments
- inform Equality and Diversity Action Plans

How to use this toolkit

Before using this toolkit, you should refer to our first toolkit 'Evidencing Equal Outcomes in Social Lettings' which will provide you with detailed information on how to use this document. The first toolkit is available on our website www.taipawb.org or from Tai Pawb directly on 029 2053 7630 or info@taipawb.org

We have made some refinements to the process used in the first toolkit to make the more user friendly and to reflect the new risk based approach to regulation in Wales.

We have set out below a short outline of the self-assessment process proposed in this toolkit. Outcomes, Indicators and Story behind the data will help you determine key equality issues and risks for your organisation. Risks and Actions and Performance Measures will help you develop action plans to mitigate risk and address issues – if you identify any. In order to keep this document concise, we have not provided examples of Performance Measures.

Outcomes, Sub-outcomes and Indicators are set out in reference tables on pages 9 and pages 18 -19. Story behind data and Risks and Actions for each Outcome are set out on the remaining pages of this document.

The equality considerations and examples used in the toolkit are illustrative. It is not suggested that the matters set out in the toolkit are commonly experienced by all social housing providers in Wales.

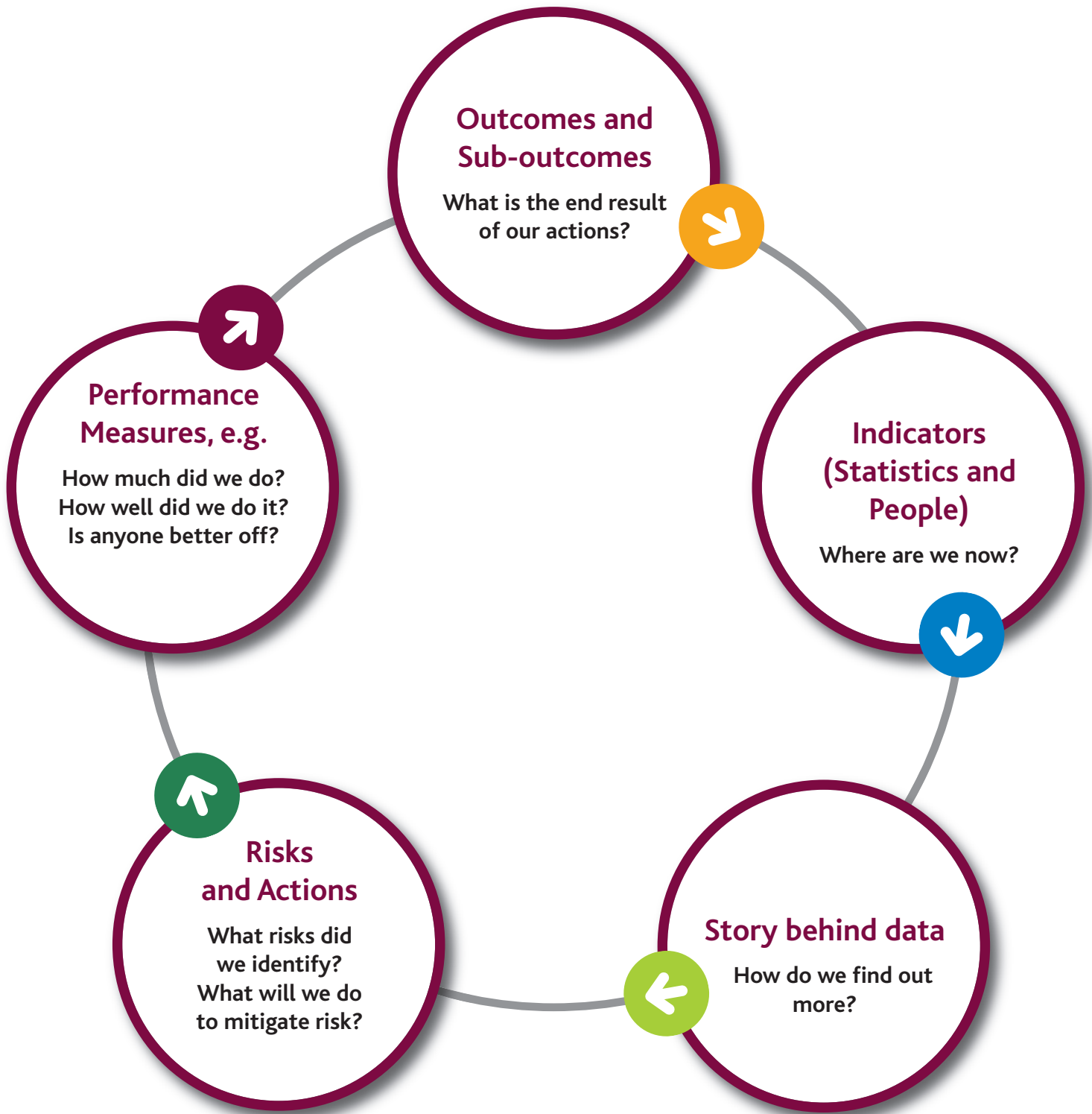


Fig 1. Process for investigating, measuring and monitoring outcomes used in the toolkit

Introduction

Outcomes and Sub-outcomes

Outcomes and Sub-outcomes are intended to answer questions such as, “What is the end result of our actions?” or “What do we want to achieve for tenants?”

This is where, in partnership with tenants, you can decide what you are striving to achieve in terms of the impact on tenants’ lives. The rest of the process will help you determine whether or to what extent you have achieved the Outcomes and Sub-outcomes you have agreed.

An example of an Outcome would be, “Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs.”

Indicators – Statistics and People

Indicators should help to answer the question, “Where are we now?” on achieving your Outcomes. It is at this stage that you investigate and identify any issues or risks.

We have divided Indicators into: **Statistics** (hard data) and **People** (soft data such as feedback from tenant engagement activities or the content of complaints). This approach is different from the first toolkit where indicators were purely statistical and the “People” section was part of the Story behind the data. We recognise that soft data can also serve as an Indicator of issues alongside Statistics (especially where Statistics have not yet been collected or user groups are too small for Statistics to have any significant meaning).

Story behind data

This part of the toolkit helps to answer the question, “How do we find out more about where we are?” in relation to Outcomes.

This is a list of examples of helpful questions that you can ask yourself about the service area to find out more about risks and potential issues.

Risks and Actions

By this point you will have identified whether there are any equality issues related to the service being assessed. This is where you identify what risks these issues pose to the organisation and its tenants. In this section you list what risks you have identified and plan actions to mitigate those risks.

Performance Measures

Providing examples of Performance Measures is beyond the scope of this toolkit. However, this step is included in the process diagram to indicate where Performance Measures can be used to determine whether the implemented actions have worked.

For more information on Performance Measures in relation to equality, contact Tai Pawb.



The Toolkit

List of Outcomes and Sub-outcomes

Outcome

Sub-outcomes

1. Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs.

- 1.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where to find information on planned maintenance programmes.
- 1.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of planned maintenance programmes.
- 1.3 Tenants' or service users' homes and communal areas are maintained to a suitable standard in accordance with their needs and choices.
- 1.4 Maintenance programmes take account of tenants' and service users' needs for adaptations and these tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when programmes are planned and delivered.

2. Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs.

- 2.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where and how to request repairs and can access information on housing upkeep.
- 2.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged in terms of response times by the method they use to request a repair.
- 2.3 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of appointments.
- 2.4 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when they require a repair to an aid or adaptation.
- 2.5 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by our recharge policy.

Outcome 1 - Reference Table

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators		Story behind data & Risks and Actions
		Statistics	People	
1. Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs	1.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where to find information on planned maintenance programmes	Number of complaints from people with protected characteristics about planned maintenance programmes compared to the number of complaints from other groups	Use tenant and service user engagement activities to find out the 'real life' experiences of people from diverse backgrounds	Go to pages 10 and 11
	1.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of planned maintenance programmes	Average waiting time comparison by protected characteristic	Case studies taken from complaints letters relating to housing repairs and maintenance	Go to pages 12 and 13
	1.3 Tenants' homes and communal areas are maintained to a suitable standard in accordance with their needs and choices	Number of tenancies breached for disrepair or refusal to allow routine maintenance by protected characteristic Satisfaction levels by protected characteristic	Information from support staff about tenants and service users who receive tenancy support	Go to pages 14 and 15
	1.4 Maintenance programmes take account of tenants' and service users' needs for adaptations and these tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when programmes are planned and delivered	Number of tenants affected by planned maintenance programmes who have adapted homes cross referenced with waiting times and delays in service delivery generally	Mystery Shopping exercises to understand the pathway for tenants and service users who have or need adaptations and how this interacts with planned maintenance programmes.	Go to pages 16 and 17

Outcome 1:

Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

1.1 Sub-outcome

1.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where to find information on planned maintenance programmes

Story behind data


Questions to consider:

- Where do we provide information on our planned maintenance programmes?
- How do we provide information on our planned maintenance programmes?
- Do we provide it in a variety of formats including audio, visual, easy read and community languages?
- How do we make sure the information reaches all of our tenants and service users?
- Are our tenants and service users satisfied that they know what planned maintenance programmes are happening?
- Do our tenants and service users know why planned maintenance programmes are being undertaken? Do we explain the importance and benefits to them?
- Are tenants and service users routinely notified when planned maintenance which may affect them is being undertaken in their area?
- Are tenants or service users from particular groups more likely to be affected by planned maintenance programmes, for example, older people living in sheltered accommodation?

Outcome 1: Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

Risks and Actions

Delays and dissatisfaction with planned maintenance programmes due to poor awareness because

Risks	Actions
<p>Information is difficult to understand and inaccessible for some tenant groups resulting in completion delays where you are reliant on tenant contact because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have no training on easy read or accessible formats including plain English and Welsh • Website has not been designed to meet web accessibility standards • Information has not been produced in community languages • When tenants and service users contact you, you are unable to answer their requests in a format they understand • When tenants or service users request information in an alternative format or language, you are unable to provide this as you do not have the necessary processes in place or the information would take too long to translate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  ✓ Ensure the format of the information is tailored to the individual needs of your tenants and service users ✓ Ensure that organisational guidelines are followed to make your information easy to understand and accessible ✓ Provide information in a variety of places including the internet, community venues, your offices, prerecorded messages on telephone systems and other forms of communication given to tenants and service users ✓ Ensure your website meets web accessibility standards ✓ Ensure you have processes in place to meet any requests for alternative formats effectively and quickly ✓ Adhere to good practice standards such as those promoted by the RNIB

Outcome 1: Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

1.2 Sub-outcome

1.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of planned maintenance programmes


Story behind data

Questions to consider:

- How do you decide on your planned maintenance programmes? Have you Equality Impact Assessed them to make sure your planning does not disadvantage any protected groups?
- Do you map / plan those properties which have adaptations against the plan for works?
- Do you inspect current adaptations or facilities to ensure any upgrades do not negatively impact accessibility?
- Do you cross reference tenant profiling data?
- Do you undertake consultation when changing communal areas?
- Do you take account of availability in the context of gender, childcare, employment, religious festivals etc?
- Do your contractors know about the communication needs of various tenants and service users?

Risks and Actions

Low completion rates and increases in evictions linked to refusal to allow access or inability to enter properties because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have not considered the needs of tenants and service users when making appointments for family accommodation tenancies, for example, scheduling works during school pick up and drop off times • You have not informed your older and disabled tenants and service users of gas servicing requirements and offered them appropriate appointments • Some of your tenants and service users will be reliant on carers, advocates or chaperones. Offering appointment times when these people cannot be present may result in refused entry • Not allotting additional time for job completion when you have older or disabled tenants and service users may result in work being left unfinished • Failure to take complaints (relating to equality and diversity) about staff and contractor behaviour seriously in the past may mean some protected groups routinely refuse entry to staff and contractors. For example, contractors used by you have not received Equality Awareness training and act in an offensive or hostile way to Trans people and those who they perceive to be gay or they refuse to wear foot coverings and are therefore denied entry to properties where this is the cultural norm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  ✓ Ensure that a variety of appointment times are offered to tenants and service users which take account of their needs ✓ Ensure your policies and procedures allow for an agreed tenant representative to be present at appointments ✓ Process map the service from the perspective of tenants and service users to understand their experiences better and make the necessary changes ✓ Ensure you take complaints about staff and contractor behaviour seriously ✓ Let your tenants and service users know what standard of service they can expect and how to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied in any way ✓ Equality Impact Assess your tenancy obligations to make sure that they do not make unreasonable demands on any protected group ✓ When staff has repeatedly been unable to access properties or there are concerns regarding tenancy obligations, make sure they know how to offer additional appropriate help to the tenant or service user and know how to refer to tenancy support

Outcome 1: Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

1.3 Sub-outcome

1.3 Tenants' or service users' homes and communal areas are maintained to a suitable standard in accordance with their needs and choices

Story behind data


Questions to consider:

- Are you aware of the needs of those who use communal areas?
- Do you cross reference adaptations to homes and communal areas before you carry out work?
- How do you make sure all tenants and service users can express their views and choices?

Outcome 1: Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

Risks and Actions

Low completion rates and increases in evictions linked to refusal to allow access or inability to enter properties because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled tenants receive a lower standard of service because you do not routinely ask about their needs which results in an inability to access or fully utilise their homes and surrounding areas • You do not respond to numerous complaints from people from BME backgrounds about behaviour and banter from grounds maintenance staff • You do not have a contractors' handbook or code of conduct which addresses equality and diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  ✓ Ensure you are aware of what adaptations have been completed in which properties and communal areas ✓ Where you are unable to replace 'like for like' ensure that you discuss alternative options with tenants and service users making sure you take account of their needs and preferences ✓ When unavoidable delays occur, keep your tenants and service users informed and work with them to provide alternatives ✓ Where there is an element of choice for planned maintenance, make sure there is more than one option which meets accessibility requirements and diverse needs

Outcome 1: Tenants and service users receive effective and efficient maintenance programmes which reflect their needs

1.4 Sub-outcome

1.4 Maintenance programmes take account of tenants' and service users' needs for adaptations and these tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when programmes are planned and delivered


Story behind data

Questions to consider:

- Do you record and share internally information on adapted properties?
- Do you explain the options for tenants and service users who have adaptations when you notify tenants and service users of planned work?
- Do you ask tenants and service users to contact you if they think they might need an adaptation or if the proposed work / changes might cause them difficulties?

Risks and Actions

When planning maintenance programmes e.g. bathroom updates, those with a need for adaptations have to wait longer than those who do not because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a specific adaptation has not been identified early enough to make appropriate grant applications • Insisting on having an up to date Occupational Therapist's report and there is a long waiting list for these • Rapid access grant service is not offered • Always utilising a grant for adaptations as a cost saving measure without taking into account the staff and administrative costs associated with grant application and completion result in you being unaware of suitable alternatives which you could provide • Tenants and service users who have adaptations receive a lower standard of service than those who do not have the need for adaptations resulting in those tenants and service users being unable to utilise their home and surrounding areas fully • The 'system' does not allow you to include notes relating to adaptations and tenant preferences resulting in some people having no choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  ✓ It may be possible to offset savings from utilising a (Physical Adaptation Grant) PAG process to pay for a private Occupational Therapist in order to expedite the service for the tenant or service user ✓ Utilise Rapid Response Grants where suitable ✓ Identify all those who might need to utilise the grants process and begin work on this early ✓ Maintain a record of all properties by adaptation type to improve maintenance planning

Outcome 2:

Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

Outcome 2 - Reference Table

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators		Story behind data & Risks and Actions
		Statistics	People	
2. Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs	2.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where and how to apply for repairs and can access information on housing upkeep	Number of complaints relating to responsive repairs from people with protected characteristics	Focus group or tenant panel to evaluate the accessibility of information produced	Go to pages 20 and 21
	2.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged in relation to response times by the method they use to request a repair	Average waiting time per reporting method cross referenced with the number of people with protected characteristics who use each method	Map the process for the tenant or service user making use of case studies and real life examples to highlight the pathway Mystery shopping with e.g. Deaf and BME tenants requesting a repair	Go to pages 22 and 23
	2.3 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of appointments	Number of tenancies breached for disrepair by protected characteristic Satisfaction levels with repairs by protected characteristic	Refer to any past consultations or satisfaction surveys which may have discussed the importance of meeting times or similar issues. Ensure you have representation from people with all the protected characteristics. Where you find an issue has been highlighted discuss with the group in more detail	Go to pages 24 and 25

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators		Story behind data & Risks and Actions
		Statistics	People	
2. Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs	2.4 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when they require a repair to an aid or adaptation	Number of people who have adapted homes cross referenced with waiting times and delays in service delivery of responsive repairs	Use tenant and service user engagement activities to find out the 'real life' experiences of people from diverse backgrounds	Go to pages 26 and 27
	2.5 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by our recharge policy	<p>Number of tenants and service users who have been charged a recharge by protected characteristic</p> <p>Number of all people who have challenged a recharge decision by protected characteristic</p> <p>Information on the reasons for recharges (e.g. type of repair) by protected characteristic</p>	Case study examples of tenants and service users who have been recharged focusing on people with protected characteristics	Go to pages 28 and 29

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

2.1 Sub-outcome

2.1 Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds know where and how to apply for repairs and can access information on housing upkeep

Story behind data


Questions to consider:

- Where do we provide information on how to report a repair?
- How do we provide information about reporting a repair?
Do we provide it in a variety of formats including audio, visual, easy read and community languages?
- How do we make sure the information reaches all of our tenants and service users?
- Are our tenants and service users satisfied that they know about reporting a repair and how we prioritise our repairs?
- Do our tenants and service users understand the importance of reporting repairs?
- Are tenants and service users routinely notified when repairs which could disturb them are being undertaken in their area (such as in flats)?
- Are tenants and service users from particular groups more affected by responsive repairs?

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

Risks and Actions

Tenants and service users from diverse backgrounds are more likely to have homes which are in disrepair and to breach their tenancy agreements because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information provided on housing upkeep is not available in alternative formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information in a variety of accessible formats✓ Ensure staff are aware and know how to utilise translation services such as Language Line or Big Word✓ Train staff to be proactive by recording house condition during regular visits and begin early intervention when needed✓ Ensure staff understand and know the tenancy support packages which could be offered and that they feel confident in discussing them with tenants and service users✓ Utilise tenant and service user forums and in-house publications to maintain awareness of tenancy requirements relating to health and safety✓ Make sure it is easy for all tenants and service users to request repairs and advice on housing upkeep✓ Help tenants and service users to understand what a repair is and what needs to be reported

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

2.2 Sub-outcome

2.2 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged in relation to response times by the method they use to request a repair

Story behind data

Questions to consider:

- Do we offer a variety of ways to report a repair, for example, email, telephone, text message, Type Talk, fax, social media, in person?
- Do we explain fully the way in which a tenant or service user can report a repair?
- Do we make sure that all of our tenants and service users have at least one way which is accessible to them to request a repair?
- Do we know if services such as Language Line are accessible for our disabled tenants and service users?
- Do we have additional adjustments in place for tenants and service users who have more than one protected characteristic?

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs


Risks and Actions

The process used to schedule appointments may favour some tenants and service users over others because

Risks

- Prioritising one method of communication over another when repair requests are made. For example do you follow up and book requests received by email before requests made by telephone message or text message? This would result in those who are unable to use email or text being disadvantaged and possibly having to wait longer for their repairs

Actions

-  ✓ Process map the journey for tenants and service users when making a repair to help ensure that tenants and service users can report repairs in a variety of ways
- ✓ Consider using mystery shopping for reporting repairs to ensure each method receives the same level of service
- ✓ Use an Equality Impact Assessment to help ensure you have a fair and equitable process for dealing with repair requests
- ✓ Conduct focus groups with people who have specific needs to check the formats you offer meet their needs

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

2.3 Sub-outcome

2.3 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by the scheduling of appointments

Story behind data

Questions to consider:

- Do we offer a variety of appointment times to suit differing needs?
- How do we take account of need when we classify a repair as urgent or non urgent?

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs


Risks and Actions

Some tenants and service users are not able to keep appointments made at certain times which may result in particular groups not being able to access repair services

Risks

- Tenants or service users who need specific appointments times because of disability or religious requirements may be less likely to report repairs if it's not possible to request specific appointment times
- Misclassifying a repair as non urgent for a person with a disability or additional health needs could potentially lead to significant health problems or even death
- Offering a limited choice of appointment times for disabled people who rely on support, people tenants who provide care, those with children or those who need a chaperone due to religious or cultural beliefs
- Not identifying the needs of individuals to have access to water for prayer times or secondary washing facilities for religious reasons and effectively refusing to classify this as an emergency

Actions

-  ✓ Offer a variety of appointment times in order to allow tenants and service users to choose times which best meets their needs
- ✓ Take into consideration the need for some tenants and service users when booking appointments to have somebody else present at the appointment
- ✓ Ensure, where appropriate, that male contractors are accompanied by female staff and that your processes take account of this
- ✓ Offer disability awareness training for all staff and adopt policies and procedures which allow staff to override the system and prioritise some repairs such as heating for older people or those with restricted mobility even during warmer months when this is unlikely to be a priority repair for those without a specific need

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

2.4 Sub-outcome

2.4 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged when they require a repair to an aid or adaptation

Story behind data


Questions to consider:

- How does your system record the fact that a repair is needed to an aid or adaptation?
- Do you keep a record of what aids and adaptations have been installed and what model number they are?
- If an aid or adaptation needs repairing, does your process create unnecessary delays? Can you send a request directly to a specialist engineer?
- Do you get information on how tenants and service users can manage in their properties without their aids or adaptations?
- How do you prioritise repairs for aids and adaptations?

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

Risks and Actions

Property damage and higher health risk for disabled tenants and service users because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When repairs are reported, tenants and service users with adaptations have to wait longer for the repairs to be carried out meaning their homes may become inaccessible and pose a health risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ When approving adaptations for standard equipment or regularly requested adaptations, try to ensure continuity of adaptation/supplier e.g. lever taps from one source✓ Keep up to date records of adaptations and cross reference this with requests✓ Keep a stock of the most common adaptations such as lever taps✓ When an alternative repair needs to be made discuss this with the tenant to ensure they can remain functional in their home✓ When it is evident that a repair may take a long time and the tenant's or service user's independence may be compromised, signpost the tenant to additional help and support✓ Ensure members of staff are trained to offer signposting to providers of support and equipment loan within the community

Outcome 2: Tenants and service users receive an effective and efficient responsive repairs service which understands and meets their needs

2.5 Sub-outcome

2.5 Tenants and service users are not disadvantaged by our recharge policy

Story behind data

Questions to consider:

- How do we decide if tenants and service users are to be recharged?
- Does our policy allow for any exclusions to recharging?
- What is the level of evidence required for a tenant or service user not to be recharged?
- Do we support tenants and service users to get a crime reference number when we require them to do so?
- What is our policy on damage caused to property by a third party where disability is involved, for example a disabled child resident at the property or a visitor with a disability?
- If a property has been damaged, what is our policy on the urgency of the repairs and how does this take account of need?
- How does our recharge policy help identify vulnerable tenants and service users who could benefit from additional support?
- How do we make sure all our tenants and service users understand our recharge policy and procedures?
- Are our staff trained to deal with hate crimes and domestic violence?


Risks and Actions

Tenants and service users who have damage caused to their property by circumstances outside their control could be unjustly charged for repairs because

Risks


- Their property is damaged as a consequence of domestic violence and you do not take this into account
- You exclude damage caused as a result of domestic violence but define domestic violence as violence or abuse between two adults of the opposite gender (male and female)

Actions

-  ✓ Ensure your policy and procedures include recharge exclusions in defined circumstances and are flexible enough

Risks and Actions

Tenants and service users who have damage caused to their property by circumstances outside their control could be unjustly charged for repairs because

Risks	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants and service users with disabilities cause 'reasonable damage' to their properties as might be expected in the light of their disability (such as wheelchair users causing damage to doors) • Tenants and service users may be unfairly charged for damages where forced entry has been used at the wrong property • Victims of hate crime, mate crime or similar incidents may be unfairly charged for repairs where property has been damaged by a third party and your policy does not allow for any flexibility to address these situations • The policy of insisting on a 'crime reference number' from tenants and service users in order to avoid recharges may adversely affect some groups who are less likely or feel unable to report crime to the police particularly BME groups and victims of domestic violence • Tenants and service users with poor fluency in English or Welsh do not understand the recharge policy and therefore are unfairly charged • Access to the appeals process is only through written complaint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  ✓ Staff to be trained and able to support or signpost tenants and service users in reporting a crime ✓ Clear and easily accessible information for tenants and service users on recharge policy in a format they understand

