

Curo Board Connect November 2022

Paul Harris (PH) introduced the session, and welcomed the customer attendees to the meeting. Board members and customers were reminded that Board Connect is designed to support a frank exchange of views between customers and Board, and to ensure that Board decision-making was informed by customers' needs and views.

The main themes for discussion were:

- Customer priorities for investment, particularly in light of the imbalance between rent caps and inflation.
- Damp and mould.

Customer priorities for investment

There is an ongoing survey on MyCuro where customers have been asked to rank 12 work types in order of importance, and the results of the survey to date were shared to start the discussion. Points/issues raised during the discussion were:

- We should consider not dropping any item on the list entirely, rather look at reducing expenditure on each proportionately.
- Repairs are still a concern, particularly for vulnerable customers, so when prioritising repairs we should consider customer vulnerabilities as well as the urgency of the repair.
- With everything that is currently going on in the world, ASB needs to be high on the list. PH advised that benchmarking suggests we focus (and spend) more on this more than other Housing Associations as we think earlier intervention can stop bigger problems arising.
- Lack of community can make things more difficult e.g. you can't call on a neighbour to help with a simple repair. PH confirmed that we are looking at ways we can help communities help themselves. It was also suggested that the Resident Involvement team could help a group of customers set up a Residents' Association.
- Participants were also asked if there is anything Curo could do better or cheaper? Suggestions included:
 - Charge commercial customers a more appropriate fee for use of Curo car parking spaces – they are currently charged the same as Curo customers.
 - Repairs – we often come back repeatedly for the same repair where it would be cheaper to replace rather than keep trying to fix.
 - Be respectful of customers' time – customers often have to take time off work for a Curo visit. It was agreed that mutual respect is very important.
 - Curo is trialling a new tool for repairs – HostCom. This allows us to view and advise on situations remotely. We are also looking to give Trades colleagues more ability to schedule visits with customers, so that appointment windows are smaller.
 - Make sure tenants know what they are allowed to do for themselves under their tenancy agreement – they may be too scared to tackle simple tasks, thinking that they will be blamed if they get something wrong. PH acknowledged that we need to make it clear what customers are expected and empowered to do

themselves, within an adult to adult relationship, as these are customers' homes.

- It can be difficult to get through on the Out of Hours (OoH) service and participants questioned whether OoH can be more expensive than doing more in-house. PH confirmed that we continually review OoH service performance. Curo has had recruitment issues within the Customer Contact Team, which has affected call wait times, and we are working hard to address this.
- Make sure we promote the other channels of communication e.g. WhatsApp and Livechat.
- Participants questioned whether we actively seek to recruit from Curo customers and were advised that we do this via social media but could consider doing more. It was suggested we could also consider offering customers time with us to enhance understanding of what we do – a “day with Curo”. PH reminded the group that we also have Scrutiny groups where residents focus on a particular area of Curo's services and invited anyone who was interested in doing this in future to let us know.
- Some suggested we introduce a call back facility: PH noted that this had been available in the past but it had actually increased waiting times.
- We should consider quick ways to communicate data about waiting times etc in real-time so that customers have a picture of what is going on at Curo – this may help them understand better why they are waiting for their call to be answered, or for a response to a query.

Damp and Mould

Points raised about damp and mould (D&M) were:

- Customers explained their experiences of damp and mould – not all had been affected.
- We need to solve the root cause issues in order to help people help themselves – there are things that people can do to help with the problem but this will not solve everything.
- Customers would welcome more clear information about what Curo can do about damp and mould, and ways in which they can help themselves. We will be doing more with customers from the point they move into a new home to make sure simple things that will help are communicated. We will be producing a Life Hack video to help customers.
- We are investing in specialist equipment and colleague training to help us identify root causes of damp and mould. Also, all D&M cases will now be put into a case management process so we can review and manage the different types of interventions that are available. We will carry out a full survey that will show the actions Curo needs to take as well as things customers should do – helping to create a partnership approach to solving issues.
- There were mixed feelings from the group about the suggestion that we could put monitoring equipment into homes to help us identify problems early – some felt it would be helpful but some felt it was a bit “big brother”.

Jane Tabor (Group Chair) thanked everyone for coming – noting that although there is not one solution for all issues, it is very valuable to hear all the different views. PH also thanked everyone for taking part in this Board Connect session – noting that this is also a form of volunteering as customers are giving up their time to help us improve.