



TPM Autumn Survey 2014

Feedback and Proposed Actions

December 2014

INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much to all those who took time to respond to the Autumn survey. Over **40%** of schools in the scheme responded, up from **25%** last year. We are very grateful to those of you who took the extra time to add further comments which have been most useful to us in looking forward. When we sent the survey we indicated that your responses would be anonymous and we would have no way of knowing which school had made what comment. A number of schools did make requests for us to address individual problems and will no doubt feel that they have been ignored. We would be delighted if they would get in touch direct so we can deal with those individual problems but we have no way of knowing from the survey which schools they are.

Regular Servicing

98% of responses expressed satisfaction with the way we developed the Annual Service Contracts and how we dealt with any questions or queries that schools raised. One or two schools commented that they were concerned that Contractors were sometimes changed without the school being consulted. We never change a contractor without consulting a school but quite often we receive no response to our consultation, which is sent by email, and we therefore make changes where we believe that it is providing better value and/or service for the school. We are always happy to work with any contractor the school wishes to use and in the event of changes taking place which you later decide you are not happy with, we are happy to revert back to the previous contractor.

88% of responses were satisfied with the management of regular servicing and a further **5%** did not express a view either way. Those who were not satisfied and made further comments focussed on two main areas: the issue of contractors turning up without an appointment continues to be a concern (4); some schools (2) expressed concern that they needed to chase us to ensure that services were completed on time. We are very clear to contractors that they have to make a prior appointment and are just as clear to schools that should contractors turn up without one, they should be turned away. We monitor planned service dates and chase all contractors who haven't provided us with the date they have booked into the school by the 3rd of the month in which the service is due. We believe we now have a very robust system for chasing the majority of contractors although we are still fighting a losing battle with alarm and lift companies.

What are we going to do?

We are going to write again to all contractors to stress the need to make early appointments and to ensure that we are informed of those dates. We will also stress that the agreed date should be confirmed to you by email. Contractors that consistently fail to provide the information to us on time will be reviewed and if necessary we will cease to use them. In the light of the above comments we have reviewed our policy on changing contractors. We continue to believe that we should act in the school's best interest and in the event of us not receiving a response to our recommendation that a contractor be changed; we will attempt to contact the school by telephone before any changes are made. We remain happy to make changes back to original contractors should a school at a later date decide it does not wish to make the change.

Reactive/Emergency Work

93% of respondents expressed satisfaction at the time it took us to respond to requests for reactive/emergency maintenance. A further 5% were neutral about this matter. Making arrangements for reactive work is our priority and for work that is required within four hours, it is our aim to place that work with a contractor within thirty minutes of receiving a request. In the last year we have introduced a system to ensure that both contractors and schools receive the same information about the work required. Not only do we contact schools to tell them when the contractor will be attending, we ask contractors to do the same. This has resulted in an overall satisfaction rate for all aspects of reactive work around the 90% mark. This is an area of work that we are able to cross refer to the surveys we send out after every reactive job. Those surveys provide us with feedback on specific jobs and we would encourage schools to take a few minutes to complete them. At the moment we receive responses from about 40% of the surveys we send. Two schools did comment that they had never had a survey to complete after a reactive job. These surveys are e-mailed out to the same e-mail address we use for correspondence about the work. We are aware that in one or two Local Authorities the firewalls set by the Local Authority can cause some e-mails from us to be rejected although we have no evidence of anything bouncing back to us. A small number of schools (6) also raised concerns that contractors do not always turn up with the correct parts to deal with a particular job.

What are we going to do?

We are working very hard at trying to get as much information as possible so that when we brief the contractor they can ensure that they are able to deal with the issue on a first visit. It is however not possible for contractors to carry all the necessary parts. We are increasingly finding issues with older boilers for which parts are becoming obsolete and are not held by local suppliers. We are talking to those companies who service boilers for us to try and ensure that they do have access to regular required parts. Sometimes the parts are expensive and schools require quotes from different suppliers. The time taken for this to happen can leave schools vulnerable should another boiler fail to work. We are looking at ways in which we can speed up quotes for parts for mission critical items and provide schools with information about issues which could potentially lead to a school having to be closed.

Provision of Quotes

This is an area which in the last three years has grown enormously. Three years ago we were being asked for less than five quotes a week. We are now averaging nearly forty quotes a week. One or two schools expressed concern that they were charged for quotes. We are very clear that quotes should be provided free of charge. There may, however, be occasions when extensive investigations are required or advice is needed from a specialist engineer e.g. a structural engineer before a quote can be provided. If this is likely to incur a charge we will advise the school and seek its agreement before any investigation is approved. Where there tends to be an issue is when a school asks for a call out which then leads to a quote because that does involve a call out charge. Whilst only 3% of the respondents were dissatisfied with provision of quotes, a considerable number, 20%, remain neutral. The biggest area of concern is the time it can take to get quotes. As part of the survey we ask people how many quotes they require and how quickly they would expect to get them. The majority of schools responded that they would expect three quotes and they would expect them within five working days although a third of schools would be happy if they were provided within ten working days. 8% of respondents said they would expect a quote within one to two working days. Whilst quotes sometimes do come back that quickly, we do not believe that is practical and we think we have to be realistic with those schools and say that we do not believe we can normally meet that expectation.

What are we going to do?

From January we are looking at ways in which we can provide quotes within the five working day period in 90% of cases. One of the main issues is tracking the progress of quotes and we will be putting extra resources into doing that to ensure that quotes are provided to schools quickly. Once we have sent the quote to the school we will no longer chase the school to see whether they wish the work to be carried out. We will simply log that the information has been provided to the school and it will then be up to the school to let us know should it wish to proceed with the work. We will however make it clear to schools where we believe the work is mission critical and a decision should be made sooner rather than later.

Building Consultants

This remains an area of concern. The numbers who are satisfied with the service remains fairly static at **just over 50%**. Whilst some schools do comment that they feel the service has improved over the last year, there are still a number of schools who express concern that they have not seen their building consultant for some time and others are unsure of the role. The relationship between the school and the building consultant does need to be a two way process and whilst we would expect them to respond quickly to any request, we would not necessarily expect them to visit if there was nothing to develop or discuss.

There has also been a tendency for schools to develop their own projects and manage them themselves usually because they believe that will save them some money. That is probably true when everything goes to plan, but when things do go wrong or professional advice is needed the cost of remedial support far outweighs any savings that could be made. The reduction in capital funding at all levels and the increased desire of schools to manage projects themselves has inevitably led to the concept of a termly visit becoming the exception rather than the norm.

What are we going to do?

We will review the role of building consultants and ensure that all schools are informed of who their consultant is and ensure both schools and consultants have the relevant contact details. We will reissue information on the role of the consultant. When schools ask for quotes which are likely to exceed £2000 we will recommend that the consultant is involved.

Contact with TPM Staff

We are delighted that once again **virtually 100%** of respondents found the staff in the TPM office helpful and quick to respond to telephone calls, faxes and e-mails. We do monitor the time it takes from a request for reactive work being received to it being placed with a contractor and that is now normally less than twenty minutes. The only exception to that has been on days when we have had an increase in the number of jobs i.e. on the first Monday in October when the temperatures plummeted and the heavens opened following a mild and dry September, we received sixty plus job requests in a single day.

We are also delighted that the introduction of our new procedures has reduced the number of those who are concerned about us not keeping schools informed of the progress of jobs from **12% to 3%**. The changes we have introduced have clearly had a marked effect in this area.

We will continue to strive to give a high level of service and to respond quickly.

Value for Money

Last year **7%** of respondents felt we were not value for money. This year that has reduced by **3%**. Clearly this has a lot to do with the re-tendering exercise which has reduced costs to all schools. In some areas the reductions have been quite dramatic e.g. Legionella 65% reduction in costs.

94% of respondents considered the management fee was value for money which is slightly up on last year (91%). In terms of the fourteen years that the service has run, the management fee has increasingly become better value for money simply because it has never increased since we began the service. In some cases it has reduced because we have moved from a single fee per school to making a reduction for smaller schools. We have to fund the service somehow. Many schemes use a cost plus method for reactive work adding anything from 5% to 20% to cover their costs for managing the work. We don't add anything but we do need to fund the cost of providing the service to schools. We believe the management fee is very competitive and considerably less than many other organisations charge. One of the reasons we are able to have a fairly low level of management fee and no cost plus for reactive work, is due to being owned by six educational charities. We see our work as primarily supporting Heads and Governors as they strive to manage and maintain their buildings whilst at the same time using as much as possible of the ever reducing available funds for the education of the young people in your care.

Reducing your Management Fee

In the survey we asked how many schools were aware of the incentives available to schools who recommended new schools to us. Despite having written about this on numerous occasions, **70%** of respondents said they were not aware there were any incentives.

If you recommend a new school to us, who subsequently join the service, we will then reduce your management fee by £250 for the year and also reduce the management fee of the new school by the same amount. If you recommend more than one school, there will be a £250 reduction per school until such time as your management fee is zero for that year.

As **93%** of respondents expressed a view in the survey **that they would recommend our service to others** we believe that this could provide for substantial savings on management fees.

Continuingly Improving the Service

We are constantly striving to improve the service and welcome any feedback at any time not just when we request it through formal surveys. Peter is always delighted to receive your comments, whatever they may be, peter@dbeservices.co.uk.

Further information

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