Stroud District Council Tenant Oversight Panel (TOP).

Report – Repairs and Maintenance Communications

Date: November 2025

Introduction

The Tenant Overview Panel (TOP) is a group of volunteer tenants who independently investigate housing services where areas of concern are brought to their attention by tenants who live in SDC properties. The purpose of their scrutiny work is to make recommendations for improvement to the Housing Committee where they discover gaps in the housing service.

Focus of Investigation

TOP decided to scrutinise communication between tenants reporting a repair and SDC's Repairs team because of tenants' feedback and the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey carried out in November 2024. The latter showed that tenant satisfaction:

- with the repairs service was only 66%*
  and
- being kept informed was only 67%

*this figure is down from 68% in the previous year and below SDC's peer benchmark of 71%

Scope of this Scrutiny

The information gathered is for a qualitative assessment to discern cause, so that recommendations by the panel can be put forward for policy consideration. The panel decided on establishing a better understanding of:

- why quarterly/annual records of communication complaints are at the levels they are,
- an indication of which areas in the process are of concern,
- and a focus on what improvements should be made

What we did

We carried out research which included:

- examination of complaints reports (April to December 2024) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to the Repairs Service

- Question & Answer session with key members of staff in the Repairs, Maintenance and Assets teams

- Shadowing session of the Repairs Call Centre in operation

- The design and commissioning of a tenant survey (detailed below)

- Travis Perkins Partnership and repairs depot visit

Survey Design.

In order to establish the main communication issues for tenants who require repair work on their buildings/homes, as per: Tenancy Agreement, Repairs section 4.2, we undertook a survey of tenants who had works completed in the three weeks of 6th to 29th August 2025. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the survey questions.

The questions were designed to elicit a view of the 'lived experience' and to demonstrate where communications were most inadequate in the progression from reporting a repair to its completion. The type of repairs, names and addresses were not recorded.

This survey has not looked at tenant/lease-holder's social factors. It is also acknowledged that tenants' and leaseholders' lived experiences are evidently variable, and determined by factors such as:

- their expectations
- their abilities to express themselves
- a limited knowledge of building science and methods
- their level of confidence to challenge and complain
- their daily work and social pressures.

Tenants and leaseholder's have a guide in their Tenancy Agreement (section 4.2.) detailing what they can expect of the Repairs and Maintenance department whose responsibilities are outlined in the Repairs & Planned Maintenance Policy (sections 4 and 5.1 to 5.2).

- 299 tenants received the survey questionnaire via post
- 35 responses were returned and recorded (a 12% response rate)
- not all questions were answered by each respondent, so this analysis cites actual number of statements recorded
- Significance is arrived at by the statements of, and proportion of, responses representing Dissatisfaction

The responses may be a small proportion of those sent out. However, there is a sufficient range of statements and opinions, that allow significance to be determined in each area of communication that a question represents.
By isolating the negative statements and experiences, areas of concern can be identified, reported on and addressed by the Repairs & Planned Maintenance team. The aim being to see how the data can inform the improvement of future repairs and maintenance policy.

Survey Results and Analysis (Ordered by area of process)

Requesting a Repair

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 6

The majority (65%) of respondents **reported a repair by phone**, while just under a quarter (21%) emailed their need for a repair. A smaller number (11%) although still significant used SDC's website to report a repair and only 3% did so in person.

A large proportion of respondents (90%) said they found it **easy to report** a repair.

Although 65% of respondents were satisfied with the **initial acknowledgement of the repair** 16% of respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied and 16% were neutral.

Scheduling/Timing

Question 8

Roughly a third (30%) of respondents were dissatisfied with the **scheduling of appointments,** while two thirds (66%) expressed satisfaction.

Responsive communication during the process (Time)

Questions 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 12

Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) said they received a **timely acknowledgement** after reporting the repair.

Over half (58%) of respondents were **not kept fully informed of progress and timelines** -19% said, 'Never', 'Rarely' and 'Sometimes' in equal measure. Less than half of respondents (42%) said, 'Always'.

Just over half (56%) of respondents were satisfied with **updates on the progress** of the repair, leaving well over a third (37%) dissatisfied.

Although 65% of respondents were satisfied with the notification about their repair being completed, over a quarter (29%) were not.

Even though, two thirds of respondents (65%) were satisfied with their overall communication experience during the repair, a worrying 32% were not.

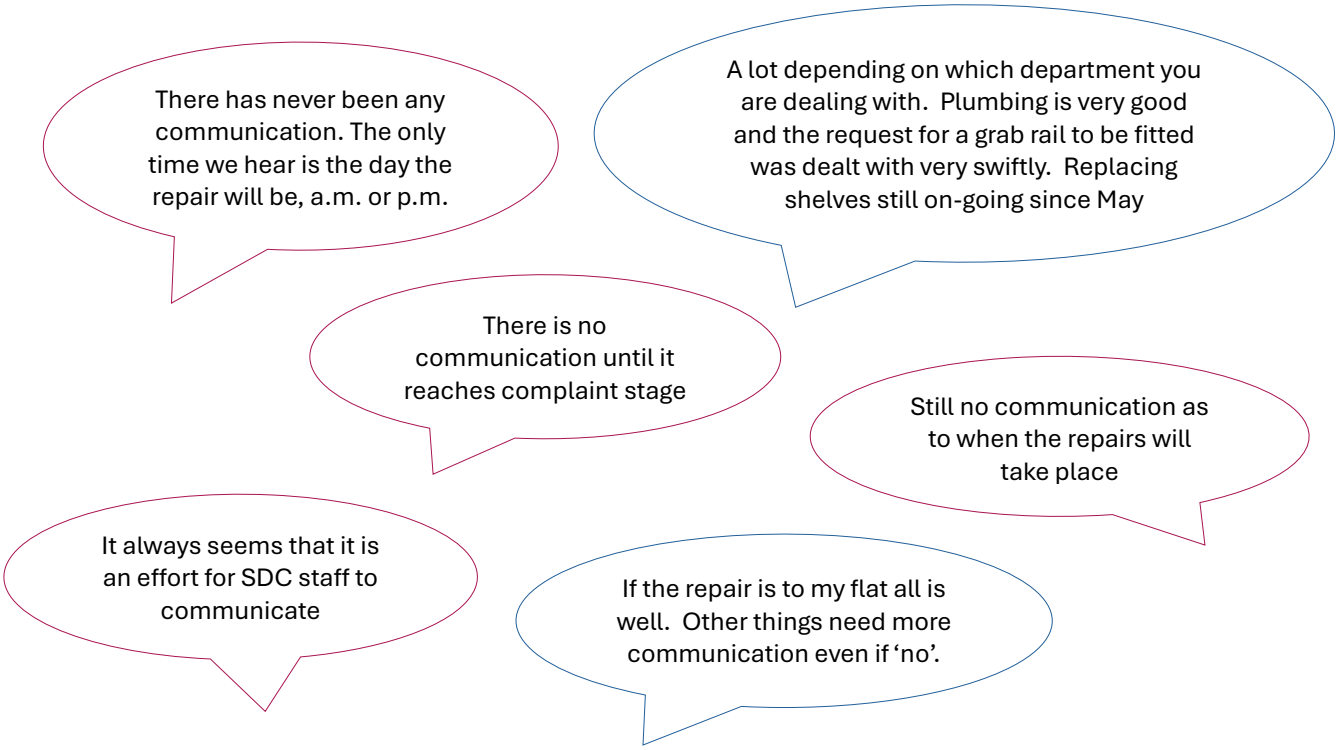
During repair work, a third of respondents (32%), did not feel they were communicated with well, although 65% were satisfied with this aspect.

Respect

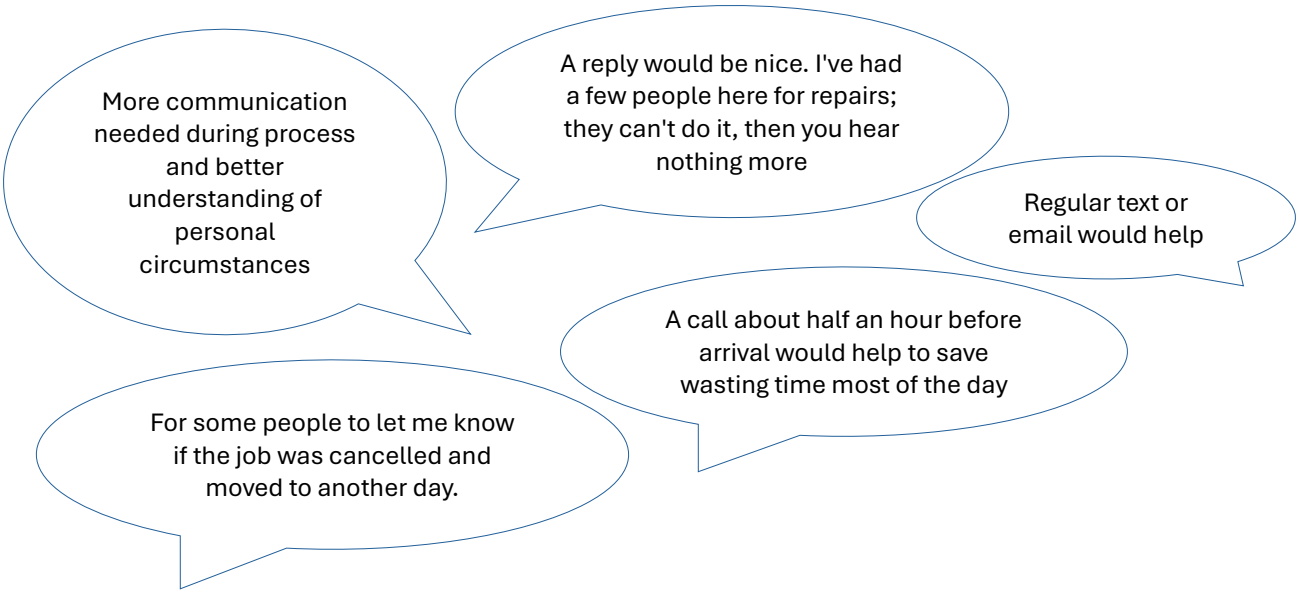
Question 9

Overall, the language and tone of communication was felt to be clear and respectful (87%) although 13% did not agree.

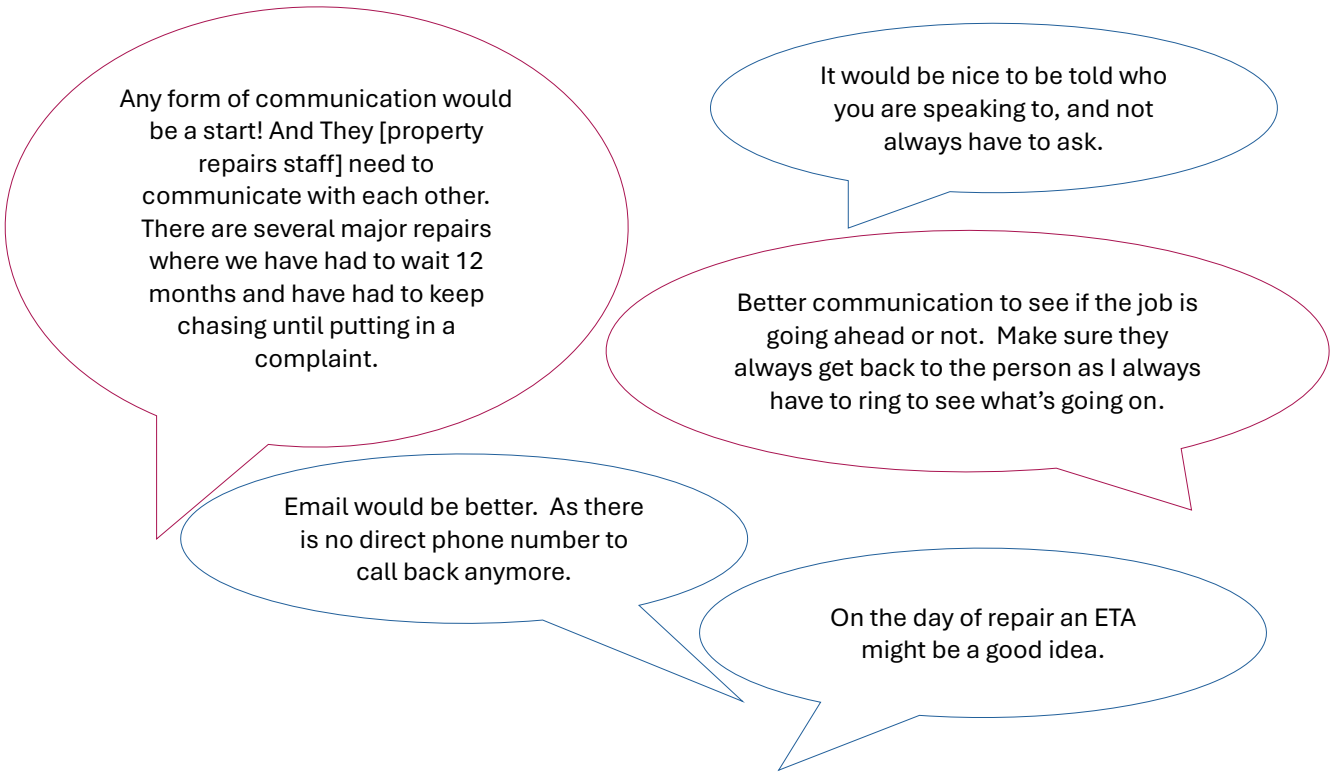
Tenants' comments about the way they were communicated with during repair/maintenance work



Improvements to how the repairs service communicates suggested by respondents



Additional comments about how the repairs service communicates with tenants



Conclusions

From the call centre shadowing exercise and our survey's figures we can identify, as significant, the areas of a tenants' personal experience of a repairs process. With the aid of the given statements, we discern causes of the most dissatisfaction in the way tenants/leaseholders are communicated with by the Repairs and Maintenance teams. We recognise that these conclusions represent an indicator for the department to direct their focus on improving and adapting policy and operations.

Most Significant Areas of Dissatisfaction:

1) **Tenants being kept informed of progress and timelines throughout the process**. More specifically,

   • not knowing when works will start
   • some works being delayed for a significant period of time, with no explanation given
   • not having a timeline of works in progress
   • having some works addressed quickly and efficiently but other works not, with no explanation why
   • for tenant's time being wasted when workers do not turn up
   • having to keep chasing information via the call centre
   • no communication until a report reaches complaint stage

   Firstly, the survey demonstrates a general frustration (and some cynicism) among tenants about not being kept informed. In other words, it is perfectly reasonable for a tenant (or leaseholder) to expect appropriate notification in relation to the progress of their repair(s) but all too often this is not happening.

TOP members therefore conclude that updates on the progress of works would be appreciated by tenants. This includes consistency in arranging appointment dates (expanded on below), communication around start-dates, delays, and completion dates.

Secondly, based on our own (group members) experiences, we consider that if there is no information about the 'repair category' to which reported works are allocated, it is not unreasonable for tenants' expectations to be challenged. Furthermore, we find the terminology and system of categorizing types of works is

1. insufficiently known about
   and/or
2. not utilized by staff in their communications with tenants.

Therefore, clarity is needed. A tenant needs to know whether their reported works fall under Emergency Repairs, Urgent Repairs, Routine Repairs or Long-Term Repairs so that progression of their repair can be clarified. We would expect this to ameliorate levels of frustration so that a sense of the "shared responsibilities" (Repairs and Maintenance Policy, section 3) can be fulfilled.

2) Tenants' satisfaction with the communication overall during the repair process

This scrutiny group discerns from the survey results (above) that when tenants are satisfied, they can be 'very satisfied' with the work done, but with some reservations about communications. And those who respond with 'very dissatisfied' are very clear that it is communications that are the significant issue in their experience. As a result, we wonder whether:

• this reflects frustration with works that progressed over an elongated period of time
• that it reflects poor quality workmanship and excessive repeat appointments
• that job allocation to 'category of repairs'/urgency is not agreed upon.

This survey does not enquire into types of repair/maintenance works experienced, for us to relate to. **Further surveys could be undertaken to establish ways in which works are categorised, in order to identify further means of achieving both tenant and provider satisfaction'.**

This scrutiny group discerns that communication about the category of repairs allocation (and therefore timescale) would be best discussed at the time of a first onsite assessment appointment. Given the presumed householders' unfamiliarity with the complexity of building-maintenance, more time should be given to an inspector's visit so explanations of the particular works needed can be given to support a reasonable level of expectation for the tenant.

3) Respectful, Clear Language and Tone of Communication

Significance of the element of 'respect in tone' is less important than the results for responsive communications and its processes. We discern that it is not so much the tone when being communicated with, but the absence of any, or untimely, communications. We consider this to denote a requirement for:

1. A more systematic method of communicating information about repairs with

tenants

2. A monitoring system that identifies areas of dissatisfaction as an on-going practice

3. A review of Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy section 1.4 to ensure more effective communication from the department to tenants, in order to fulfil the department's commitment as stated in several ways in section 1.2.1 of the document.

4) Ease of reporting a repair

Levels of dissatisfaction were low here, and accessibility on this point is obviously mostly achieved. We discern that the current systems and options of initially reporting a repair, as already stated in Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy, section 4.2, is generally regarded to be satisfactory. However, from observations made when shadowing the Call Centre, it became apparent that reports of repairs via email and text were not given immediate attention, unlike telephone calls. This may partly account for dissatisfaction in this area.

Recommendations

Setting these conclusions against the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard 2024 as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing, we identify that point 2.3.3 - “Registered providers must communicate with affected tenants on progress, next steps and outcomes when delivering landlord services.” - is not fully achieved based on our tenant survey responses.

We have the following recommendations to be included in both the department's staff practices and repairs and maintenance policy. Requiring a systematic method that institutes and improves upon consistency in giving tenants works-progress.

1. A job-number/reference with report date for tenants, call-handlers and operatives, to use when dispensing appointment dates; start-dates; updates; delay notifications, and completion dates. This would ensure compliance with the council’s Repairs Policy section 5. This could overcome a sense that tenants may have, of not being heard or respected when providing information about problems in council housing stock which affects their homes.

2. Give a tenant early notice and clear information regarding the identified category of their repair work - Emergency Repair, Urgent Repair, Routine Repair or Long-Term Repair so that scale of progression of their repair is clarified.

3. Ensure that tenants reporting a repair have a designated/responsible member of staff to contact should they need to make an enquiry about the repair.

4. Give sufficient resource to all communication channels available for the reporting of repairs so that a timely response can be made in accordance with timescales set out in a communications policy – based on observations of the call centre

5. Where a job requires an initial survey, more time should be given by a surveyor, so that explanations and details of the particular works needed, and causation of

problems can be given to support a reasonable level of expectation for the tenant. Written details, job-number, job-category allocation, a 'schedule of work', signed by the visiting surveyor to help clarify and ease future communications.

6. Consider further regular housing stock surveys and/or monitoring system that: a) identifies areas of dissatisfaction as an on-going practice. b) provide the flexibility to establish and review repairs needing re-categorisation.

7. Review the entry in Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy section 1.4, regarding effective communication, in order to reflect and fulfil the department's commitment as stated in several ways in section 1.2 of the document.

8. Implement a monitoring system that identifies areas of dissatisfaction with communication during the repairs process as an on-going practice.

9. Consider implementing a Chatbot as a method of communication (to be tested by tenants beforehand)

Appendix 1

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
www.stroud.gov.uk

Tenant Satisfaction - Repairs & Maintenance Communications

We treat all information provided on this form as confidential and in compliance with Data Protection laws. We will use the information and feedback that we gather to help us identify any aspects of our service that may need improvement. Our privacy notice can be viewed on the website: Privacy Notice

Section 1: Requesting Repairs and Maintenance

1.How did you report the repair? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Phone call
- ☐ Via SDC website
- ☐ Email
- ☐ In person (at the council office)
- ☐ Other (please give details below)

2.If 'Other', please give more details.

3. How would you rate the ease of reporting a repair? Please select below.

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

4.Did you receive timely acknowledgement or confirmation after reporting the repair?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Can't' remember

5.Were you kept informed of the progress and timelines throughout the process?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

Section 2

Section 2: Satisfaction with the communication you received

6.How satisfied are you with the initial acknowledgement of your repair(s) report/maintenance work?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

7.How satisfied are you with updates on the progress of the repair?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

8.How satisfied are you with the scheduling of appointments?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

9.How satisfied are you with the notification about your repair being completed?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

10.Was the language and tone of communication clear and respectful?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11.How satisfied are you with the overall communication experience during the repairs/maintenance work?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

12.What do you feel is working well about the way you were communicated with during the repair/maintenance work?

Enter your answer

13.What improvements would you like to see in how the repairs service communicates with you during repair and maintenance work?

Enter your answer

14.Any additional comments or suggestions about how the repairs service communicates with you.

Enter your answer

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey, your feedback is important to us. As part of our continuing effort to improve our services to you, we rely on feedback from our community. We will analyse survey responses to help us understand how our repairs service is performing and where we can improve based on your feedback.
We want to know when we get it right so that standards can be maintained or improved, but we also want to know when things don't go well, so we can learn, improve and develop the services we provide to you. If you wish to leave a compliment or pursue a complaint about the service, please visit our website or contact us:

https://www.stroud.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback/

Appendix 2

Excerpt from Secure Tenancy Agreement

4. REPAIRS Section

4.1 If you discover a defect

4.1.1 You must tell us about any defect in the property which is our responsibility to repair within a reasonable time, keeping a record of the time date and method of reporting any defect.

4.1.2 If you fail to notify us of a defect, which is our responsibility to repair, as per 4.1.1, we may cease to be responsible for the repair of that defect or we may recharge to you the additional costs of putting it right occasioned by your failure or delaying in notifying us.

4.2 Our responsibilities, as outlined in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

4.2.1 We will maintain all aspects of the structure of the property.

4.2.2 We will maintain gas, water, electricity and sanitary systems in the property.

4.2.3 We will maintain space and water heating systems in the property.

4.2.4 We will maintain structures and water and electricity systems for shared areas

These repair categories are:

- Emergency, including out of hours emergencies - 24hrs
- Urgent - 5 working days
- Routine - 28 working days
- Long-term – 84 working days

See Repairs & Maintenance Policy (sections 4.3 to 4.8) for more details regarding repair categories

Excerpt from Repairs & Maintenance Policy 2024

Appointments

5.1.1…. are offered according to their categorisation and in agreement with the tenant. Where the repair requires the use of a specialist contractor the tenant will be advised by SDC that the contractor will contact them directly to arrange a convenient date and time for the works to be carried out. See Repairs & Maintenance Policy sections 5.1 to 5.2 for further details

Appendix 3

List of Documents

SDC Tenancy Agreement (Secure)

Repairs and Planned Maintenance Policy (January 2025)

Complaints Reports 2024 -Quarters 1,2 & 3

SDC Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey 2024/25

Key Performance Indicator Report – Quarter 1 2024/25

Event Report: Tenant satisfaction Measures 2024/25 (held on Thursday 3 July 2025)

Transparency, Influencing and Accountability Standard (April 2024)