

Report of Client visits

June to October 2005
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Scope

- To visit a representative sample of organisations using:
 - NHF Schedule of Rates
 - Locator / Locator plus
 - Housecall
 - Handbooks
 - Checkmate

Objectives

- To find out
 - If the products are being used.
 - How are they being used.
 - What is liked about the products.
 - What is not liked about products.
 - If the products are used effectively.
 - Clients knowledge of products and services from M3 Housing and their awareness of the NHMF.
 - Clients expectations from the products they use.
 - Their wishes for future developments.

Objectives

- To give the client in return a basic health check of their repairs and maintenance service, from the front line repairs service through to the their asset management strategy.
- To provide a detailed report to the NHMF committee and a presentation to the NHMF Conference

Range of Clients

- 39 Organisations visited in:
 - South East region
 - South West region
 - Eastern region
 - East Midlands region
 - West Midlands region
 - Wales
- Stock levels ranged from less than 500 to more than 14,000 units

Response & Void repairs

- Contractual arrangements
 - Large RSL's and LA's
 - Most use NHF Model Contract
 - Many of those who have recently tendered or are about to tender have added partnering options
 - None of the organisations visited have used the NHF partnering model
 - Small RSL's < 1000 units
 - Most have no contractual arrangement in place
 - Schedule of rates used mainly as an ordering and commitment tool

Response & Void repairs

- Contractual arrangements
 - Generally 2 or 3 year term with option to extend further 2 years
 - RPI is preferred method of applying annual increases
 - Most organisations use minimum order values averaging £20
 - One invoice per job with variations agreed prior to invoice submission

Response and Void repairs

- NHF Schedule of Rates
 - 56% had tendered using the Schedule of Rates.
 - 21% use schedule for ordering but pay on day rates.
 - 6% use with Open Book partnering arrangements.
 - 6% do not use the Schedule of Rates
 - 11%??
- The majority of clients visited are now using V5
- The rest have contracts running with V4.1 and 4.2
- Percentages tendered for V5 vary from -4 to +50%
- Virtually no tailoring of the schedule items except to reduce the number of items

Contract & Performance Management

- Most organisations with contractual arrangements hold formal progress meetings.
- Typically those that do not have formal contractual arrangements do not hold meetings with their contractors.
- All organisations measure customer satisfaction & performance against response target times as set by the regulators. Most report acceptable levels of performance although the majority have not had their performance validated.
- It was rare to find performance statistics readily available
- There was a lack of effective performance management in the majority of the organisations visited.

Repairs Reporting

- Wide range of Housing Management systems used.
- Most either use or are considering diagnostic software.
 - Locator plus is the most common.
 - Most users are very pleased with it.
 - Dissatisfaction with Locator can usually be traced to lack of training or inconsistency of use.

Repairs Reporting

- Developments for Locator plus – many clients would like to see:
 - An improved search facility for finding schedule items.
 - A mini schedule of rates (or standard descriptions) developed specifically for use with Locator plus.

Repairs Reporting

- Views on Repairs Handbooks
 - Most have tenant handbooks that incorporate a section on repairs giving basic information on policy, level of service and responsibilities.
 - There are mixed views on the usefulness of specific repairs handbooks.
- Views on Housecall
 - Most organisations cannot justify the cost at present.
 - There is increasing interest in Housecall.

Inspections

- Pre-inspections
 - Most organisations are reducing pre-inspections.
 - Target is usually 5-10% of all repair reports maximum.
 - Confining to potentially high value repairs, typically in excess of £500 or complex issues, e.g. damp, or ownership difficulties.

Inspections

- Post inspections
 - Most organisations are increasing the level of post inspections for response repairs to a minimum 10%
 - Post inspections are focused on checking quality of work and validating invoices.
 - There are very few organisations who take the opportunity to use this process to evaluate their service as a whole, looking at the quality of service from receipt of the request through to final completion of the job.

Stock Re-investment

- Asset Management Strategy
 - Most have a strategy in place and review it periodically.
- Stock Condition
 - All had carried out a stock survey since 2000
 - Most were sample surveys.
 - Updating by either new survey or rolling sample survey.

Stock Re-investment

- Re-investment programme
 - Targeted to meeting Decent Homes requirements.
 - Usually 5 year programme identified from stock condition data and energy rating assessments.
 - Many have used partnering arrangements in reinvestment programmes. Typically for Kitchen and Bathroom replacements, External Redecoration and Heating Replacements.
 - Lack of quality stock and energy data may mean some organisations are not targeting their reinvestment monies in the most effective way.

Regulation & Initiatives

- Inspection
 - No results published for those inspected.
 - A number due for inspection in 2006/7.
 - A small number of RSL's visited had recently been under HC supervision.
- Efficiency Agenda
 - Most organisations had prepared and submitted their Efficiency Statements to the HC.
 - Most larger organisations have or are considering membership of a procurement club.

Regulation and initiatives

- Service reviews
 - Most organisations have carried out a review of their repair and maintenance services within the last three years.
 - Very few have developed a programme to continually review their services.
- Benchmarking
 - Most use Housemark to benchmark services
 - East Midlands Benchmarking Group was also popular with local RSL's
 - 10% of clients visited had used Checkmate but another 25% expressed interest.

Issues for M3H and the NHMF

- Promotion

- Many clients are unsure or unaware of:
 - the role of the NHMF.
 - the relationship between themselves, Rand Associates and M3 Housing.
 - the advertising and promotion of events such as this conference.

Points to changes in personnel and lack of contact.

Issues for M3H and the NHMF

- Product Development

- Almost a third of clients visited would like to see us develop a mini-schedule of composite items to:
 - compliment the full schedule.
 - provide standard job descriptions for day rate use.
 - provide standard job descriptions for Call Centre use.
 - provide job commitment values.
- A large number of Locator users would like to see an improved search facility.

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