



National Housing Maintenance Forum

Delivering Sustainable
 Benefits for the
 Community





Best Contract - Delivering Sustainable Benefits for the Community

Describe the services provided and why they should be considered for the award.

Gedling Homes took over the ownership and management of Gedling Borough Council's housing in November 2008 following a tenant ballot under the Government's Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Programme. With the transfer came a £41.9 million five year investment promise to radically improve homes, estates and the environment.

As a Registered Provider, Gedling Homes appointed Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) to carry out an £18 million Decent Homes programme, as the sole contractor delivering kitchen and bathroom replacements.

The contract is running on schedule and to budget with success endorsed by consistently strong customer satisfaction ratings. The contract goes far beyond 'bricks and mortar' improvements, demonstrating genuine inclusive partnering.

The contractor has integrated within Gedling Homes' neighbourhoods, which has resulted in significant wider benefits to the community including: investment in the local economy, the creation of employment and apprenticeship opportunities, embracing sustainability and promoting energy saving measures to help alleviate fuel poverty.

To Gedling Homes, this represents a **GREAT** contract. Working in partnership with the organisation, and at the heart of neighbourhoods, FHM is delivering the ethos of Gedling Homes' corporate vision: Great Homes, Great Neighbourhoods, Great People and our values: **G**enuine, **R**espect, **E**xcellence, **A**chievement, **T**ogether.

Gedling Homes has a Strategic Partnering Charter to maximise the value provided by its contractor partners to benefit Gedling Homes' customers. FHM is one of the signatories on the charter, which is reviewed annually.



Strategic Partnering Charter

Question 1: What is innovative about the service provided?

Delivering kitchen and bathroom replacements for Gedling Homes' customers is substantial work and understandably intrusive. The contract has been carried out demonstrating both respect for customers and flexibility around individual circumstances. This could not be achieved without innovation underlining the contract.

FHM's Project Manager Pete Watson (MCIOB), demonstrated creativity in solving bespoke issues encountered. He brought three decades of industry experience with FHM and has ensured Gedling Homes and the needs of its customers have been at the core of decision making.





Taking choice to the customer

A number of elderly customers in sheltered schemes were refusing works. Understandably, due to their age, they did not want that level of disruption in their homes. It is equally difficult to mobilise older customers to attend choice events, which could demonstrate the difference the improvements would make. The answer, take the show home experience to the older customers.



Mobile Choice Event Unit at Nabarro Court

The Project Manager was aware of a mobile trailer, not currently in use, which could be transformed into a Mobile Choice Event Unit. It was fitted with the swatch of choices available within the kitchen replacement range, including door fronts, worktops and handles. It has a sample bathroom with over bath shower options. It features samples of the choice of floor coverings and, more importantly for the demographic, an Occupational Therapist adapted bathroom facility including the latest shower technology. Alongside this the trailer was fitted with a boiler and electric fireplace. To accommodate the intended demographic, the unit was fitted with ramped access to allow customers with disabilities or on scooters to view the choices on offer.

The unit's success was quickly evident, in the first two days it was taken out to a number of sheltered schemes and there was a queue of customers keen to see the choices for themselves. The measurement of success was evident to see as 100% of customers at Nabarro Court, Calverton, signed up for the improvement programme.

As a goodwill gesture to the contract, FHM changed disused store cupboards in several sheltered schemes into facilities for customers to use when the communal kitchen is closed. An outside tap was also fitted at one sheltered

scheme, so a green-fingered customer could spend time watering the gardens.

Recognising the importance of sustainability

As a point of innovation, and reflecting the responsibility the sector has to the sustainability agenda, all waste produced from the homes is recycled through Wastecycle, a waste management and recycling company. The percentage of waste recycled from the contract per month has regularly been at 99-100%, figures which are externally audited.

Materials including wood, brick, plaster, glass and packaging is recycled. New uses range from the creation of woodchip board to producing a waste-based environmental alternative to coal, for use at a cement-making plant.



Wastecycle

Customers and Board Members visited the Wastecycle plant in Nottingham to see the process for themselves. The site houses some of the most advanced waste processing equipment currently available in Europe. In practise, waste from each house in Gedling is brought back to a base point in the borough, from which Wastecycle collects. This in turn minimises the number of heavy vehicles moving across the borough and reduces the carbon footprint on the environment.

The rising costs of fuel are understandably of concern to customers. FHM's Resident Liaison Officers have undergone training from the Energy Saving Trust and are now endorsed 'Energy Advisors' enabling them to impart valuable energy advice throughout the liaison process.





The Newstead story – a case study in innovation

Former council homes in Newstead, an old pit village, transferred over to Gedling Homes and Locally residents considered Newstead the 'forgotten village' in terms of investment.

Gedling Homes took on 47 terraced back-to-back 1920s properties in the village. The homes were desperately in need of the major investment. Young families, pensioners and customers with disabilities hold tenancies. The homes were due to benefit from new kitchens and the replacement of the bathrooms, situated on the ground floor, in year three of the programme, with work starting on 5th September 2011.

Innovation and creative problem solving have been key to rising to the challenges encountered at Newstead. While carrying out site walks eight weeks prior to the start date, the Project Manager discovered damp in the ground floors of the properties. A full ground floor refurbishment had to be incorporated into the kitchen and bathroom programme including: damp proof course, damp proof membrane, ground floor rewire, new plastering and flooring. This involved substantial disruption for customers, who had to live in the top floor of their property whilst work was undertaken.

Customers' ground floor furniture and belongings were put into storage. Due to the ground floor location of the bathroom, respite had to include full bathing facilities alongside a traditional dayroom provision. At the close of each day, the toilet and bath were re-plumbed and cleaned down and customers provided with a 'service station' including a twin hot plate and oven, a fridge if needed, and two 25 litre bottles of water.



Pete Watson with Dog Pen

Such disruption to customers' lives meant that turnaround time was critical, set at 23 days. The first handover was achieved in 20 days and all handovers have taken place inside the 23 days.

A number of customers in Newstead had large dogs in the properties. To ensure operative safety and a safe working environment, the contractor built and used dog pens to address the issue.

Given that customers had to live on the upper floor of their property, the safety of young children was also of concern and so child safety gates were purchased and used at the top of the stairs as a matter of procedure, if children were in the household.



Customer Katherine Riches with Child Safety Gate

Theresa Ball has lived in Newstead all her life and is raising five-year-old daughter Paige in her Gedling Homes' property with partner Darren Tideswell.

A school governor at Newstead Primary, Theresa works part time for Tesco in Customer Service, so appreciates how important all the safety measures implemented were. Her property was the first to be handed over in Newstead.

"The improvements have made my home so lovely. I'm so proud of it and want to keep it nice. It's really like a brand new house downstairs," she said. "The kitchen and bathroom were designed around the things that are important to me. I needed more cupboard space and now I have units all around the kitchen and the layout is based around my appliances. I used to have a tumble drier at the top of the stairs because it's the only place it would fit. As a mum, you can imagine how inconvenient it was to traipse up and down with laundry. Now it's all in the kitchen and it's wonderful. The bathroom was tiny but with some adaptation, they've made more space, which means I can bath my daughter with a bit of room to move."





“The improvements to the property have changed my life and the workmanship was excellent. I really praise the FHM team, they were real stars who couldn’t do enough for me.”



Theresa Ball celebrates the first handover with the Gedling Homes' and FHM team

Newstead resident and Gedling Homes' customer Debbie Bingham has not just benefitted from the improvement programme, the mother-of-two has secured employment with the contractor, cleaning the respite and welfare facilities and working alongside the Multi Skilled Operatives, cleaning the properties ready for handover. She also cleans FHM's offices in the borough.

“Getting employment thanks to this contract has been a life changing opportunity,” said Debbie, who has lived in Newstead for six years.

“It feels like I’ve got a new house, I’ve a job and it’s really given me a new start in life. It’s given me my respect back. I have to thank Pete and his team for this opportunity, I really couldn’t ask for a better place to work.

“It’s also great to see the difference improving the homes is making in the neighbourhood, everyone is talking about it.”

The Ward Councillor and borough’s Mayor, Patricia Andrews, has also praised the Newstead work. In an email to Gedling Homes' Managing Director, she said: “I went to Newstead last week to the Gedling Homes' coffee morning and then looked at the work being done on the houses - it really is very impressive, really high quality and I think the residents will feel it has all been worthwhile. I had another look at the Headline Satisfaction Data, that's really something to be proud of.”



Debbie Bingham and Pete Watson

The success at Newstead is demonstrated by the fact that all the properties will be handed over by the end of November 2011 before the harsh winter weather.

Initially, three Newstead customers refused improvements but through demonstration and customers' word of mouth spreading about positive experience, these three customers have now requested the improvement work.

Newstead has also caught the attention of BBC TV series Village SOS, presented by Sarah Beeny, due to the work of Newstead Enterprises, which are transforming the site of former pit tips into a thriving country park, including angling lakes and an eco-build visitor centre.

**Question 2: What are the benefits to:
a) the client**

The contract runs efficiently and successfully. The pilot phase saw 45 units completed, year one 670 units, year two 753 units and year three 820 units.

The initial contract was awarded for four years with an option to extend a further one year. The overall success of the contract is demonstrated in the following statistics:

- Customer satisfaction with service 99%
- Performance (client officer's score) 97.30%
- Defects at handover 0%
- Programme performance 100%
- Cashflow targets -0.01%
- Response to complaints 0%

The contractor is working in 15 properties a week on average but has opened up more properties in order to hit Gedling Homes' spend targets. Turnaround times have also been exceeded. Bathrooms were set at 10 days but





have been delivered in seven to eight and kitchens set at 15 days are now delivered in 13 days.

The contract is sustaining employment opportunities within the borough, with some 70 operatives including local subcontractors working on the project.

As a Registered Provider, such performance figures are of interest to our regulators and also Gedling Borough Council, with which our transfer agreement was made.

b) the contractor

FHM has forged a solid reputation for its work with Gedling Homes and the contract has proved award winning. The team secured a silver Considerate Constructors Scheme award for year one and two of the project. They also won a commended and the regional Best Site Category in the 2010 National House-Building Council Health and Safety Awards for the project.



Gedling Homes' Investment Manager Brian Drake celebrates NHBC Award with Pete Watson

FHM's approach to customer satisfaction is regularly endorsed, it receives numerous thank you cards from happy customers praising workmanship.

Based on strong performance, it was also awarded the contract for Gedling Homes' Occupational Therapy referrals for bathrooms and kitchens, having proved ability to work with vulnerable customers. Some 500 adaptations have been carried out to date.

FHM also carried out the £650,000 refurbishment to Gedling Homes' new head office, a Grade II-listed property. Gedling House, a 210-year-old three-storey building, became the base for around 60 employees and is used as a venue for a number of tenant based community events.

c) the residents

The kitchen and bathroom contract forms a major element of Gedling Homes' Improvement Programme. These are the core rooms in any home and are the key improvements that customers were desperate to see, and which they voted in favour of, in the transfer vote.

Customers receive genuine choice when the improvements are carried out. They can style their kitchens to their own taste by choosing from a range of door fronts, worktops, tiles and paint, for example, and in bathrooms by choosing from a range of tiles, paint and anti-slip floor coverings.

Strong communication

Customers are respected at every stage of works to their home. Strong communications is key to good customer service. The contractor has a comprehensive communication pack, which covers all areas of the induction process for the customer and includes a suite of 'working forms'.

Each customer has a dedicated Customer Liaison Officer, who guides them through the work and what levels of disruption to expect and who shows them the respite facilities that are available. The contractor appreciates that the major nature of the work is disruptive and ensures that providing a comfortable facility away from the noise, where a customer can have a quiet drink, or launder clothing while kitchens are being worked on, are of great importance to the customer experience.

Property Boards are left with customers at the start of the works which include FHM's 'Our Commitment to You' posters. This shows the target completion date, includes daily diaries for inspections which are used by General Foremen and Customer Liaison Officers and a Resident's Contact Sheet which highlights all relevant site team numbers.



Fish and chip social at Roe Hill, Woodborough





FHM sends out regular newsletters, entitled the 'Gedling Gazette', to our customers in the areas they are working in to update them on progress, customer satisfaction levels, community initiatives and general site news. Customers receiving works are also brought together in social events such as fish and chip lunches.

The communications methods previously mentioned are complemented by the contractor's Out of Hours service, manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This freephone line can be used by any customer experiencing issues out of office hours.

Benefits for residents across the borough

Residents of the borough, not solely Gedling Homes' customers, have also benefitted from the contract, which resulted in much sought after apprenticeship opportunities for young people. The apprenticeships were recruited following a jobs fair run in partnership with Gedling Homes, FHM, the local college and Job Centre Plus, which was attended by 135 people.

Through the contract, a total of 12 two year apprenticeships were made possible.

Six apprentices went on to secure jobs with FHM and a seventh with one of FHM's local subcontractors.



Apprentices celebrate

One of the six to secure work with FHM is 23-year-old Christopher Hall, a Trainee Construction Technician. He completed a two year HNC in Construction and is now studying for a Bsc Hons in Construction Management at Nottingham Trent University.

Christopher, who has lived in the borough all his life, said: "I was unemployed for a year. The apprenticeship initially gave me the chance to get back into employment and education. My goal now is to finish my qualification and to get as far as I can in construction."

The contractor also has a presence within local schools near the sites where it is working on Gedling Homes' behalf, having visited 10 primaries to date. To warn children about the dangers of playing on construction sites, it gives safety talks, where youngsters can dress in hard hats and high vis jackets. This gives a serious message but through a medium engaging to the age of the audience. It also runs 'design a poster' competitions to reinforce the safety message.



FHM mascot visits school to promote safety message

Gedling Homes and FHM supported the learning curriculum through an eco challenge at Arnold Hill Technology College. The challenge involved pupils designing an eco village and presenting this to representatives from Gedling Homes and FHM in a Dragons Den style approach.

d) the neighbourhood

The contract, as part of Gedling Homes' £41.9 million investment promise, is helping customers take pride in their home, which in turn generates pride in estates and communities, again reinforcing our vision to create: Great Homes, Great Neighbourhoods, Great People.

The contractor has embedded itself firmly as a stakeholder in the borough; it sponsors the local Arnold Football Club,





an Under 11s team, and the annual Christmas tree switch on.

Question 3: What were the financial costs and cashable benefits?

As trust developed in the contract, towards the end of year one/beginning of year two, we moved from open book to basket rates, giving greater cost certainty for budget expenditure.

In delivering the kitchen and bathroom replacements, the contractor also brought us value engineering. Changes in kitchen unit manufacturer secured savings of £200,000 over the life of the programme and an alternative sanitary ware specification resulted in savings of £55 per bathroom.

The benefits the contract is bringing to the wider community cannot be measured financially as such but they are making the strong communities and proud neighbourhoods that Gedling Homes is committed to.

Question 4: How relevant is this as an example that might be followed by other organisations?

The contract represents genuine partnership working based on trust and openness, ultimately for the benefit of customers. As a Registered Provider, Gedling Homes believes the achievements within this contract showcase best practice and include innovation in problem solving worthy of sharing with peer providers and representative bodies such as the National Housing Federation.

The goal of Gedling Homes is to raise the standard of services for affordable housing tenants. The contract demonstrates Gedling Homes' and FHM's commitment to do just this.

