

# Bulletin

Issue 19 - 2017



National Housing  
Maintenance Forum

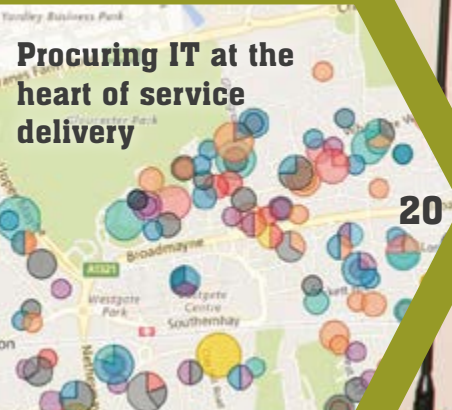


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**Improving property performance**

# Welcome to the NHMF Bulletin 2017

Liz Circuit, Secretary (NHMF)



Welcome to the NHMF Bulletin 2017. For the first time in its history, the Bulletin will only be available online this year. Many of us will mourn the passing of the printed copy which had evolved into a quality publication, well received by practitioners up and down the country; but we are now embracing the many advantages of online media. In not producing a hard copy, we are giving ourselves more flexibility and saving the cost of both print and distribution.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this edition for their time and willingness to share their views and expertise. The articles are grouped in accordance with the key topics that were discussed at the NHMF Conference in January 2017, which the NHMF Committee still considers to be the most important areas for Asset Managers. These remain: compliance, contract management, responsive repairs, planned investment and last, but not least, the use of technology and data.

The NHMF Maintenance Conference in January returned to the Hilton Metropole in Birmingham, where delegates felt they had settled into their new home with only distant, albeit fond, memories of Stratford upon Avon. Thanks to all the participants at the conference; it was deemed to be a great success with a record number of delegates, and extremely high quality content for all the sessions.

The overarching themes at this year's conference were those of leadership and innovation, which were recognised as being crucial to the future of the sector in these pages last year. The discussions during the various sessions led quite easily to the conclusion that the future had to be built on ever closer collaboration. This is reflected in these articles, which our speakers have kindly produced to reflect the conversations at the conference.

There is always scope for better inter-departmental co-operation in any organisation, regardless of its size. By now, maintenance and development should be working hand in hand to increase the housing stock with properties that are easy and cheap for residents to heat and maintain. Finance should no longer be a stranger to either party, but be both supporting them, and reaping the benefits of their working together to deliver more for less. The board, having invested their time in coming to an understanding of asset management, should be keenly awaiting reports on compliance and planned investment. The tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire is certain to focus attention on fire safety and guidance as a key consideration which the NHMF will continue to promote within the sector.

Moving forward, there needs to be scope and capacity to look outward and forge new relationships beyond one's own organisation. Some examples are to be found in this Bulletin: such as schools actively promoting careers in construction, (See Rebecca's article on page 8 to see what can be achieved); with residents developing online services (Nick Atkin page 2); or to help them into work; with women looking to increase the diversity of their workforce (Jane Nelson page 7); with suppliers and contractors improving efficiency (Peter Long page 20). There must be a long list of potential partnerships with health providers, recruitment agencies, training schemes, education, the prison service, hotels, universities, local business, private landlords and other social landlords. The intention is to cover as many examples of new partnerships as we can in the conference programme next year. Please get in touch to tell us about the new links you have made and the benefits they have delivered.

In other areas of NHMF activity, Contractor Forum membership is open to contractors of all sizes. NHMF training days and the annual NHMF study tour welcome clients, contractors and consultants to a neutral forum. Entry to the NHMF Awards gives a morale boost to hard-working teams and shares their good results with peers who could benefit by adapting the project to suit their particular organisations. See the website at [nhmf.co.uk](http://nhmf.co.uk) for additional events and activities taking place during the year.

We look forward to seeing you at the next NHMF Maintenance Conference which will return to Birmingham on Tuesday 23 & Wednesday 24 January 2018.

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The National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) sets the standards for maintaining assets and manages the development of the M3NHFSchedule of Rates. For more information visit [nhmf.co.uk](http://nhmf.co.uk)



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## Changing lives, building communities

Jennifer Hawthorne, Head of Income and Communities (Northern Ireland Housing Executive)

**Challenging segregation and dealing directly with the consequences of the conflict has been central to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's work since its establishment 46 years ago.**

From 1969 to 1973, 60,000 people were forced to leave their homes, leading to widespread segregation, which continues to this day. The Housing Executive's community cohesion unit is tasked with promoting our community cohesion strategy against this background of division.

Almost 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement, social housing remains deeply segregated and there is no doubt that community division and segregation exert a high price which, in housing terms, prevents the best use being made of existing housing and land.

Successful implementation of our community cohesion strategy calls for joined up thinking and collaborative working between and within communities, agencies and individuals. Community cohesion depends ultimately on trust and safety and we will do all we can to help to build that trust and safety for our tenants.

Underpinning the Housing Executive's overarching aims and objectives, our community cohesion unit is charged with translating our community relations objectives into actions on the ground through the implementation of the Community cohesion strategy 2015-2020.

Unlike other housing bodies across the UK, the Housing Executive continues to deal with the effects of conflict including: repairing bomb and riot damage; intimidation resulting in homelessness; operating security schemes such as interface adjustments.

Building peace at interfaces is an especially sensitive and intensely scrutinised process. The Crumlin Road peace wall is a major flashpoint, marred by decades of violence, ongoing parades and protests. If handled incorrectly, the potential impact for our work and good relations within communities could have a detrimental impact.

The 'changing lives, building communities' campaign focused on our work in facilitating and relationship building between the communities of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican Ardoyne and the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist Woodvale in Belfast. This led to the historic removal of the first of the Housing Executive's 21 peace walls.

Interfaces dominate the landscape of many working-class communities in Belfast. Research shows that 94% of Belfast's social housing estates remain segregated. Peace lines are a physical manifestation of this divide and we have a key role to play in transforming interface areas. A Life and Times survey states that 80% of people aspire to live in mixed neighbourhoods.

**“ Community cohesion depends ultimately on trust and safety and we will do all we can to help to build that trust and safety for our tenants. ”**

In order to gather support for the removal of the peace wall, public meetings were held, door-to-door visits carried out and we met with community leaders. We secured the support of our leadership team, government, statutory partners and staff.

In February 2016, the cohesion strategy was launched. However, media coverage focused on segregation rather than the ground-breaking work of the Housing Executive.

Aware that work on the Crumlin Road interface was imminent we worked closely with our PR team to focus on the powerful story the community had to tell. The interface removal project was funded by the Department of Justice, supported by IFI Peace Walls, PSNI, Belfast City Council and was part of the Programme for Government. Having secured their backing we made a film about our work, unique to NI and the UK, about how we make a difference.

The film we made enabled an interface community to tell its story of living behind a wall for 30 years. We empowered the community to take ownership of the campaign by leading on interviews and we engaged with political leaders, securing buy-in from Northern Ireland's Deputy First Minister to officially launch the project when the work was completed.

One of the most remarkable outcomes of our approach and campaign was to have now secured additional funding for our interface work. Since the removal of the wall and the positive publicity that was generated, we have been approached by three other interface communities including Woodvale, all of which are talking about redeveloping their interfaces.

The film can be viewed here [youtube.com/watch?v=7ciM4b4PXZs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ciM4b4PXZs)

“ If you take a step back, most housing services work on the basis of waiting for things to go wrong and then fixing them. This is inefficient, expensive for the landlord as well as inconvenient for the customer.”



## How to get your CEO and your Financial Director to be your best friends

**Nick Atkin**, Group Chief Executive (Halton Housing Trust)

**Most people you speak to don't feel they are fully understood or valued by their Chief Executive Officer or the real powerbroker in most organisations, the Financial Director.**

At my NHMF session in January, I outlined the pivotal role maintenance services have in the long-term success and sustainability of any housing business. There are two key factors:

- reallocating resources from process management to value added activity via a self-service approach
- rethinking how we build and maintain our homes by moving services from being reactive to pre-emptive

The first thing to accept is that the housing sector needs to change. There is a misplaced assumption that people who live in social housing don't have access to the internet. Nothing could be further from the truth.

- 10% of UK households no longer have a landline
- In 2014 mobile internet access overtook desktop usage. The future is mobile!
- 6250 Halton Housing customer interviews found that nearly 9 out of 10 customers have access to the internet. Last month 80% of all our customer generated transactions were dealt with via online self-service

Self-service dramatically reduces the average cost per transaction, from £15 to just £0.10.

Equally important are the resources released. In the last 12 months the reduction in calls has led to a reduction in our Customer Services Team of 50%. It has also freed up other resources through a reduction in the number of people involved in each individual process from four to one.

Still need to be convinced? Well here are some key numbers that may help.

	Sep-14	Feb-17
Contact via digital	6%	51%
Digital transactions	4%	79%
Proactive Live Chat	91 (Apr 15)	728
CST incoming calls	7,725	2,500
Outgoing calls to customer		-60%
Face to face (home or office)	1200	300
Internal emails sent	56,000/mth	35,000/mth

This illustrates some of the other associated benefits of a digital shift.



In line with our **Digital First strategy**, we've developed a customer app, website portal, community TV & games console channel, plus mobile working. Our aim is to have **90% of customers accessing services online** by 2018

**1 in 2**  
of all contacts are now made using digital channels

**99%**  
of rent balance enquiries are now made digitally

**65%**  
of households have accessed services digitally in the last year

16 modules for mobile working used by over 100 frontline staff, **saving 30-45 minutes per visit**

Incoming and outgoing calls to the Customer Service Team have fallen by **60%**

**39%** of repairs are now requested digitally and **67%** of ASB cases raised

Satisfaction with online services runs at

**93%**

**74.4%** of customer transactions are now via digital channels

Integral to the success of our digital transformation has been our app. This is simple to use, and interfaces directly with our housing system, providing customers with the services they need at the point of request.

## UPDATES TO OUR APP

There's never been a better time to download our customer app. We've added some handy new features to help you make the most of it:



### REPAIRS

You're now able to self-serve repairs to your home, and tailored timeslots for your repair have been developed further with options such as 'avoid the school run'.



### ESTATE REPORTS

You can now be more specific with your estate reports, with options such as 'green spaces', 'grey spaces' and a 'tree problem'.



### GAS SERVICE DATES

There's more information on gas service dates (when the last service took place and when the next one is due).



### NEWS FEED

We've added in a news feed so that you can stay up to date with all HHT news, including the customer handbook and information on right to buy.



### WAYS TO PAY RENT

There's further guidance on the many ways available to pay your rent which include paying via Allpay (a secure online portal), request a payment card or to set up a direct debit, or use the IVR automated payment line.

### LifeKIT

There's access to LifeKIT, our online toolkit and guide to saving money and taking control. It contains resources including 'manage your money' and a budget calculator, 'reduce your monthly bills', 'improve your job prospects' and 'get online' plus help and advice on living a healthier life.



### CHANGE MY DETAILS

This is a new section which allows you to view and update your contact details to make sure you don't miss out on important information. You can change and reset your password here and join in with surveys too.



### UNIVERSAL CREDIT

You can learn more about Universal Credit, with information and videos to explain how to register and how the changes may impact you.



### MAKE A COMPLIMENT

In addition to making a complaint, if you're thrilled with our services, we'd love to hear about it too in our new 'Make a Compliment' section. There's also full access to your communication history with the Trust.



### MOVE HOME

There are direct links to Homeswapper, Movemaker and PropertyPoolPlus to ensure you have all the information you need if you're on the look out for another property.

**SO DON'T DELAY...DOWNLOAD THE HHT APP TODAY!**

Customers can self-serve repairs to their home. This also offers tailored timeslots that include options such as 'avoid the school run.'

We need to rethink our approach to repairing our homes. This was clearly set out in this recent article by Gavriel Hollander in Inside Housing. [insidehousing.co.uk/analysis-and-data/analysis/changing-how-we-think-about-repairs/7018282.article](https://insidehousing.co.uk/analysis-and-data/analysis/changing-how-we-think-about-repairs/7018282.article)

If you take a step back, most housing services work on the basis of waiting for things to go wrong and then fixing them. This is inefficient, expensive for the landlord as well as inconvenient for the customer.

A post deregulatory landscape offers a real opportunity to deliver a truly active asset management approach that takes account of a range of factors that affect the long-term stability of our homes and neighbourhoods.

Forget the tinkering around to shave a few thousand pounds off a budget to reduce costs. The real efficiencies can be realised from a shift in approach using a combination of data, sensors and predictive analytics.

A shift in the replacement life cycles based upon actual usage and condition can have a huge impact upon the business plan. This is how your CE and FD become your best friends.

We also need to change the way we build and maintain homes. New building techniques offer a game changing shift in how we deliver a supply of new affordable homes.

	Cycle	+2 years	+3 years	+5 years
Bathrooms	30	32	33	35
Boilers	15	17	18	20
Kitchens	20	22	23	25
For 250 homes over 40 years	Cost	Cost	Cost	Cost
Bathrooms	828,000	776,000	752,000	709,000
Boilers	1,604,000	1,415,000	1,337,000	1,203,000
Kitchens	1,630,000	1,482,000	1,417,000	1,304,000
For 250 homes over 40 years	Saving	Saving	Saving	Saving
Bathrooms	0	52,000	76,000	119,000
Boilers	0	189,000	267,000	401,000
Kitchens	0	148,000	213,000	326,000
Total	0	389,000	556,000	846,000
Per home over 40 years		1,556	2,224	3,384
1000 homes		1,556,000	2,224,000	3,384,000
5000 homes		7,780,000	11,120,000	16,920,000
10000 homes		15,560,000	22,240,000	33,840,000
20000 homes		31,120,000	44,480,000	67,680,000
30000 homes		46,680,000	66,720,000	101,520,000

Our recent experience has shown how homes can be constructed in just 10 weeks (compared to 42 weeks for traditional build) and were watertight within just 9 days. We've condensed the build into this 3 minute video, using a time lapse camera. [youtube.com/watch?v=Noswd7XMq4o&feature=youtu.be](https://youtube.com/watch?v=Noswd7XMq4o&feature=youtu.be)

The early findings from the analysis of customers' utility bills shows these are considerably cheaper to live in than traditional homes.

The different components used are also enabling us to manage these homes in a more cost-effective way.

The housing sector has been slow and resistant to change. What is clear is that we are living through a time when organisations need to adapt or fail. If you remain to be convinced just consider the reasons why the likes of BHS, Kodak, HMV and Woolworths all failed. There are many lessons, as well as opportunities, for the housing sector to learn from.



# Contract strategy for Brexit



**Andrew Millross**, Partner & **Ross Hayes**, Consultant (Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP)

The result of the EU referendum in June 2016 led to significant short term market instability, but since then there has been some settling down. However, the decision to trigger Article 50 in March 2017 should be seen against the backdrop of steadily increasing construction materials prices, fuelled by a low pound, and rising construction labour costs. Concerns over the availability of labour, an ageing workforce and uncertainty over the continuing availability of EU workers can only push up these costs.

**Given this, how should housing providers approach contract strategy decisions?**

## Contract lengths

One temptation might be to move to short-term contracts; to wait and see what happens. It is important for contracts to include break clauses, ideally allowing either party to break the contract, if necessary. However, short-term contracts mean frequent re-tenders and a lack of continuity. With a short-term contract, there is no incentive for either the contractor or housing provider to work together to fix problems. You also lose the benefit of the efficiencies that can be gained by working together over a long period.

## Price / quality split

With the increased focus on value for money, the costs of contracts are likely to become increasingly important in the future. The rent cut for housing providers has certainly led to more weight being placed on price in tender competitions.

The costs of payment disputes, or a re-procurement after a contractor walks away are always going to be higher than ensuring the contract is properly priced and resourced from the outset. This makes it more important than ever that contracts are awarded on the basis of overall value for money rather than lowest price.

## Inflation index

Over the past few years housing providers have tended to use the consumer prices index (CPI) for annual price increases under responsive maintenance and servicing contracts. Until the rent cut, this linked price increases to the housing provider's ability to finance them from rents. However, with the CPI there is no direct link to construction materials or labour costs inflation, risking contracts becoming unsustainable.

With construction costs inflation likely to outstrip general inflation in the near future, providers may need to consider using different inflation indices, such as one of the Building Cost Information Service indices.

## Pricing models

Recent years have seen a move to "fixed price" contracts, often on a price per property basis. With these models, the contractor benefits from a known income stream, which helps with resource planning. These have worked well in times of relative price stability. However, with any fixed price contract, there is always a contingency built in to cover the risk that the work turns out to be more than was assumed at the start.

Greater price volatility and the ever increasing focus on value for money could herald a possible return to target cost contracts, at least for larger contracts and planned programmes. Although these require more work to administer, particularly when checking actual costs, they do offer the potential for risk sharing rather than "risk pricing".

## Form of contract

We are often asked which is the "best" standard contract to use. This depends on several things such as how actively the client wants to manage the contract, and whether the contract form supports the proposed payment arrangements.

The form of contract to be used should be the last thing that is decided. With new editions of the JCT, NEC and TPC contracts being issued recently, providers also need to ensure that their "standard" amendments work with the latest versions of these forms.

Alternatively the M3NHF Schedule of Rates Form of Contract offers a complete suite of contract documents intended specifically for housing providers which is regularly updated so that it reflects current legislation and best practice.

**“Concerns over the availability of labour, an ageing workforce and uncertainty over the continuing availability of EU workers can only push up these costs.”**

## Procurement routes

The convenience of procuring via a buying club has proved popular in recent years, and this is likely to continue. However, for larger contracts, where the percentage of the contract price the contractor pays the buying club is a significant amount, providers need to consider if they are getting genuinely value for money.

For providers undertaking their own procurements, it is worth considering the competitive procedure with negotiation. This offers the option of a "negotiation stage" where it is possible to explore whether changes to what is being procured could lead to greater value for money. Providers then submit 'final tenders' so as to ensure there is a fair competition following the negotiation stage.

## Bringing work in-house

One response to the current market instability is to bring work in-house. As well as saving VAT on labour (for registered providers, but not local authorities) this puts the provider more in control of their repairs, with the risks and responsibilities this entails. This approach assumes that in times of labour shortages, it is easier for the provider to recruit and retain the right workers than to engage a contractor to do so.

These are just some of the things housing providers need to think about when deciding their contract strategies. Good preparation, planning and follow through is necessary to get the contract strategy right. It is very difficult to manage a contract well if it is the wrong contract for the work and does not contain the right incentives and remedies to encourage quality performance for the right price.



## Apprenticeships- they move with the times

**Chris Irons, Gas Production Team Leader (Hyde Property Services)**

**I had the pleasure of speaking at this year's NHMF conference, and used the opportunity to talk about an alternative option to recognised traditional apprenticeships.**

I began my career at Hyde as an apprentice gas engineer straight out of school at the age of 16. My training took three years and since then I have worked my way up the organisation to manage the team that once taught me.

**“ the housing sector must embrace, and reap the rewards from different approaches to training. This must include considering people who we may have never considered for traditional apprenticeships and who could otherwise easily be lost to the industry. ”**

Over the last couple of years I, like many others, have felt the constraints of the rent cuts and have had to try and save money across the business, which means that unfortunately some areas have had to be sacrificed. However, given the current skills shortage, we could not afford to cut apprenticeships.

With this in mind, I started to explore alternative ways of training new operatives and developing the experienced tradesman we so

desperately need. I contacted some local training providers, who told me there were some mature apprentices (those older than 19 years of age) who needed work experience to complete their qualifications.

While we were not able to employ these people, we did offer them work placements to build their knowledge and complete their portfolios. One such person was Rob, who I spoke about at the NHMF Conference. He really made the best of the training opportunities offered by Hyde.

It was clear that Rob was committed to both Hyde and our customers, so we decided to offer him a full time apprenticeship. It is worth noting that even if we had not been able to offer Rob a role, we were happy that he would have been able to pass on his knowledge and improve his skills. This would have meant he left us in the best possible position to pursue his career in housing and that the sector as a whole would benefit from another skilled tradesman.

Rob was originally undertaking a two year plumbing apprenticeship but we explored his options and he decided to switch to a GGFO (Guild of Gas Fitting Operatives) apprenticeship, comprising 20 days of intense training spread over 20 weeks, followed by six months on-the-job. Rob was paired up with several tradesmen to ensure he developed his working style. He passed all his assessments with flying colours and was rated 'top of his class' by the training company.

Once qualified, Rob was promoted to the role of Gas Improver, where he was able to start to gain experience working independently. He also received a pay rise for gaining his qualifications, so he could see immediate, tangible benefit for his hard work.

Rob is now an integral part of my team and an asset to the business. It is a shame to think that as a mature apprentice with no funding he would have slipped through the system; his skills would have likely gone to waste.

We all love to say "it has always been done like that", but to meet the skills shortage, the housing sector must embrace, and reap the rewards from different approaches to training. This must include considering people who we may have never considered for traditional apprenticeships and who could otherwise easily be lost to the industry.



# is hard!



Peter Hall-Jones, Director (The Spiral Partnership)

What's the difference between 'having to' and 'wanting to' change?

I have frequently tried to change. Like many readers I'm sure ...I've tried to be more charitable to a colleague, lose weight, be more patient when the WiFi goes down...but it's just so hard isn't it? Even when the logic and benefits of change are so obvious, change is still hard. And yet as we all know change does happen, constantly and not always in the ways we'd like.

So, what will get us, as an industry, to change, to work together for mutual gain?

The building next door as I write this is being renovated and a massive RSJ has been sitting on the pavement for three days. It has been fun to watch folks walking and working around it. Sitting on it, resting coffee cups on it – anything but move it.

Then at one magical point a range of tradespeople downed tools and coffee cups and assembled, discussed, joked, teased, stalled and then came together to share expertise, talk over each other, say nothing, huff, puff, sweat, boast, pretend, lead, encourage, shout, laugh, advise and grunt this battering ram into place and form a massive doorway.

And then after suitable backslapping, autopsy and celebratory coffee and fags, all assembled tradespeople filtered back to their individual tasks and roles like the sad end to a great flash dance.

Job done.

Clear vision, task driven, identified individual motivations, comradeship. The opportunity to help others and be part of the action all played a part in shifting gently this brutish piece of orange red immovability.

In this task - each Adonis, each expert, each team player, each mathematician and physicist, each and every one had a motivation, a clear vision, a benefit in achieving the task and escaping the loneliness and responsibility of isolated work to come together on something bigger than me and mine – to come together as a temporary but authentic community. It wasn't his job or hers. It wasn't ever considered to be one person's job. It was bigger than that, seriously big.

**“ each and every one had a motivation, a clear vision, a benefit in achieving the task and escaping the loneliness and responsibility of isolated work to come together on something bigger than me and mine – to come together as a temporary but authentic community. ”**

The need for homes and shelter is big. The responsibility to give every family, every girl and every boy a home, a safe bedroom, somewhere to learn and snuggle, to eat and drink, to work and thrive is compelling.

The shortage of skilled and motivated individuals is felt by many. Competing for limited resource tends to mean the rich get richer the poor poorer. The limited resource, whether it be rice, or water, or sparkies, or plasterers, gets wasted. The housing sector has the opportunity to grow the resources it has through inclusion, inspiring apprentices and listening to their ideas, catch your experienced staff before they retire and turn their interests to mentoring the idealistic newcomers.

We need to work together - which may be the biggest change

Change is hard. Common sense isn't. Change is possible. Who wants change? – We do!

Pete Hall Jones – used to be a teacher and now works around the world helping organisations understand how and why they think the way they do and then helping them to think and act differently and to achieve significantly higher goals. Pete Hall Jones will address this and other aspects of changing self and others when he speaks at the next NHMF conference in January 2018.





**“ we can’t stop until, as a sector, we are much further down the road to ensuring that half the population is fairly represented in our social housing trade workforce. ”**

**Jane Nelson**, Group Executive Director (Mears Group)

**I started my career as a trainee painter and decorator in the 1980s and, sad to say, it seems that there were more women working and training on the tools in social housing in London then, than there are now across the country. For some time, many of us have realised that we need to be doing more about that.**

The approach Mears has taken is to recognise there is a problem of under-representation in this area and to prioritise addressing it across the Group. Mears believes that the solutions to tackling this, so that we can all build trade workforces which represent the communities we serve, rest in working together across the social housing sector. To that end, Mears as a CITB levy payer, successfully secured the support of CITB to deliver some projects that we hope will make a difference. A steering group made up of representatives from a wide range of social housing bodies and organisations is directing these projects through to completion<sup>1</sup>.

#### Projects

- Trade taster courses for women – delivered in partnership with Construction Youth Trust and Women into Construction and aimed at women living in social housing.
- Schools Toolkit – trade-based activities which are linked to the national curriculum whilst showcasing women in the trades.
- Resources directory – to signpost girls and women to organisations which can help them find training and work in the trades in the social housing sector.
- Best practice guide – showcasing the good work going on in this area. Helpfully, there are exemplars across the country from which we can learn including Nottingham City Homes training schemes (see page 8).
- Legal guidance for procurers of maintenance services – drafted by Andrew Millross, Partner at Anthony Collins Solicitors. This will assist procurers to encourage contractors to focus on this area of under-representation when tendering for maintenance work.

I am confident that each of these projects can have a positive impact. A simple example: a trade taster course was recently delivered in South Wales in conjunction with United Welsh Housing Association and its subsidiary, Celtic Horizons. An initial disappointment that only six women attended the day long course soon turned to delight when a month or so later four women secured trade apprenticeships with Celtic Horizons – all of whom decided to apply because of the taster course.

The focus which Mears has brought to this has included training over 30 of our own tradeswomen in how to use the Schools Toolkit. This included presentation skills and confidence building as well as classroom techniques in how to hold the attention of dozens of children at once. Too often, tradeswomen are sent into schools to act as role models without being given the skills and support to maximise the interactions they have in the schools. Mears tradeswomen ambassador programme and Schools Toolkit aims to address that.

I’m pleased to say that Mears has had some significant success in recruiting women trade apprentices which bodes well for our aspirations to build an increasingly diverse trade workforce. Mears is conscious, though, that this isn’t just a numbers game and our approach to diversity and Inclusion talks about what we can offer as a ‘warm and welcoming’ company – we want these apprentices to build their careers with us and feel valued and respected throughout their employment with us. It also isn’t just something that building maintenance firms and social landlords need to focus on every now and again. It needs to be built into the ‘this is the way we do things around here’ ethos and that can’t stop until, as a sector, we are much further down the road to ensuring that half the population is fairly represented in our social housing trade workforce.

For more information on these projects, to contribute a best practice case study or to appear in the resources directory, please contact [gainor.keeton@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:gainor.keeton@mearsgroup.co.uk)

<sup>1</sup> Women into Maintenance Steering Group Members: Liz Circuit, NHMF; Alison Inman, CIH; Eamon McGoldrick, NFA; Paul Pledger and Billy Parks, The Guinness Partnership; Lynda Sagona, United Welsh; Rebecca Hart, Nottingham City Homes; Liane Sheppard, Sovereign HA; Vic Grimes, Construction Youth Trust; Kath Moore, Women into Construction; Andrew Millross, Anthony Collins Solicitors.



**Rebecca Hart**, Women in Construction Officer (Nottingham City Homes)

**I have worked in engineering and construction for nearly 20 years, both as an electrician and in supervisory roles. I came to a career in construction having failed at school and worked in a series of dead end jobs. Now I couldn't imagine working in a more rewarding, varied and vibrant industry. A few years ago, I realised that I wanted to understand the barriers faced by women entering the industry, and the reasons why women don't stay.**

I am proud to work at Nottingham City Homes (NCH), an organisation that recognises the benefits of having a diverse workforce and one which delivers on its commitment to reflect through its staff, the communities it serves. In 2015, NCH advertised for a full-time Women in Construction (WiC) Officer, to ensure the delivery of its commitment to increase the representation of tradeswomen and female managers to 10% and 36% respectively by 2020.

These were ambitious targets, and of course there were the naysayers who argued that we would never reach them. However, we are making real progress, and this is how.

Firstly, we developed an initiative to attract women from three key target groups - those furthest away from work, those wanting a career change, and those returning to work. We deliver monthly construction taster workshops to these groups, led by our own tradeswomen, giving them the chance to try the various trades on offer.

## Gender imbalance – what are you pretending not to know?

**“ Tradesmen speak positively about us, and acknowledge that women's organisational aptitude, customer facing skills and right first time attitude is a real asset to the organisation. ”**

To meet our longer term objectives, we work with local schools to break down gender stereotypes and promote construction roles for young women by using the Mears practical tool kits to spark interest in potential future careers in construction. When we initially talked about working with schools, the reaction was, that they wouldn't be interested and that they wouldn't let us in to meet pupils. However, that proved not to be the case, several schools did welcome us in, and they continue to do so. We have now adopted a creative approach, collaborating and identifying need that allows us to partner with charity-funded initiatives such as Business in Classrooms, NEET prevention programmes and Futures to deliver training that ties in with the national curriculum.

We have doubled the number of female trades recruits we have coming through from the taster workshops, and we have sustained engagement with school girls who have been positively influenced at an early age by the practical workshops we've run in local primary and secondary schools this academic year. The schools are starting to understand our purpose, and the participants love it – Jade, who took part in a workshop in January, said, “The workshops are amazing – I now know this is something I want to do for a living!”

Something else we did this year was to work alongside award-winning theatre-based training provider 'Peas above Sticks' to empower women, challenge personal and organisational bias and, build resilience through a series of tailored workshops. The programme has stimulated significant interest in career progression for 30 women at NCH, many of whom want to progress into senior roles within construction.

Evidence from customer satisfaction surveys recognises the positive contribution made by tradeswomen. Tradesmen speak positively about us, and acknowledge that women's organisational aptitude, customer facing skills and right first time attitude are real assets to the organisation.

Before NCH's WiC initiative was launched, just 0.5% of the organisation's construction apprenticeship applications were from women. By 2016, the number had increased to 16% - fast forward to 2017 and our WiC workshops are oversubscribed, and women are taking up traineeship, apprenticeship and work experience opportunities. Next steps for this year include extending the WiC development programme to all middle managers in NCH, to raise awareness of unconscious bias and stereotyping, and to reinforce the company's core values.

As our Chief Executive once said, we should never be prepared to rest on our laurels - change is the only constant, but let's continue to work together to make it a change for the better.





# Who's on the hook? Understanding and minimising TUPE and pensions costs in insourcing, outsourcing and contracting



Doug Mullen, Senior Associate & Kate Watkins, Associate  
(Anthony Collins Solicitors)

Staffing costs are usually some of the most significant costs in providing a service. It is therefore unsurprising that the application of TUPE can be hotly contested when a contract is being tendered or comes to an end. Outgoing providers are keen to ensure that they are not left with the bill for redundant staff who do not transfer. Incoming providers do not want to inherit liabilities created by the outgoing provider or staff who should not transfer.

## Should I stay or should I go?

Increasingly, we have seen contractors and clients willing to dispute the application of TUPE, sometimes resulting in stand-offs only resolved shortly before transfer or by an employment tribunal where neither party is willing to compromise. Often, it is not inheriting liabilities for discrimination, equal pay or unfair dismissal which prompts the dispute, as these may well be covered by indemnities. More frequently, it's about who does (or doesn't) transfer, as both outgoing and incoming providers look to avoid redundancy costs that they may well not have budgeted or priced for. Where employees are also entitled to access their pension early on redundancy (as may be the case in the Local Government Pension Scheme), the price of losing the argument can be significantly increased by additional pension contributions.

As the start of the new contract approaches, the out-going provider is often left to decide whether to carry out consultation to meet the requirements of TUPE or redundancies. Failure to get this right can result in significant financial penalties.

## Early warning

Early identification of potential issues around TUPE transfer is therefore key to ensuring that one is in the best position to minimise costs and risks. This can involve a detailed analysis of new and old contract specifications, whether and how staff are organised, as well as what staff are employed to do, how they spend their time and how cost and value is allocated between this and any other work that they do. Key information will include:

- old and new contract specifications
- details of employment benefits
- details of working arrangements – old and new.

Ideally, the client will be able to secure this information through contractual arrangements with the outgoing and incoming providers. Otherwise, trying to evaluate who transfers can be a bit like a game of poker.



“ Simply selecting those who have transferred is likely to land an employer in hot water. This is because dismissing an employee because of the transfer is automatically unfair. ”

## Indicators of scope for challenge

Key things to look out for include:

- a reduction in or re-shaping of the service, perhaps due to budgetary pressures
- a change in the organisation commissioning the service – for example where a different member of a group of employers commissions the new service
- signs that staff are deliberately organised around the service for the client, such as vehicles with joint livery, references to the client in job descriptions or contracts and consistency of staff
- staff who carry out other work which is not part of the service or who are temporarily working on the service or elsewhere or who are long-term absentees.

## Making changes related to the transfer

Where the service is over-staffed, providers may wish to make redundancies. TUPE does permit redundancies to be made but providers need to make sure that they show that it is a genuine redundancy situation and that they have followed a fair process. Simply selecting those who have transferred is likely to land an employer in hot water. This is because dismissing an employee because of the transfer is automatically unfair.

Where costs are too high or terms differ significantly from a provider's standard terms, an incoming provider will often want to change terms and conditions. TUPE limits employers' ability to do this where the reason for the change is essentially related to the transfer. Employers can think that a change has been agreed only for an employee to rely on their old terms.



# CDM 2015

## Risks and pitfalls associated with the appointment of the Principal Designer



**Tony Mitchell**, HM Principal Inspector of Health and Safety (Health & Safety Executive) & **Tim Clark**, Senior Associate (Kendall Kingscott Ltd)

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) created the new role of Principal Designer (PD). This brings the functions of planning, managing, monitoring and co-ordinating the design stage of a project directly into the project team under the control of a designer.

**“ The definition of construction work has not changed, and duty holders still need to make a sensible judgement as to whether CDM 2015 applies to activities such as maintenance. ”**

A PD is required where there is, or likely to be, more than one contractor involved, and must be appointed in writing. They should be in control of the pre-construction phase and be in a position to advise the client of their responsibilities.

They will support the client in bringing together and providing the Pre-Construction Information (PCI) and act as the conduit for disseminating that information to the various dutyholders who will need it at the right time. This will be an ongoing responsibility throughout their appointment.

The PD is responsible for ensuring the designers working on the project discharge the duties placed upon them.

In addition, the PD will work together with the Principal Contractor (PC) throughout the life of their appointment to ensure the health and safety implications of design aspects and later changes are properly considered, support the PC in drawing up the construction phase plan, and develop the health and safety file and provide it to the client at the end of the project.

The definition of construction work has not changed, and duty holders still need to make a sensible judgement as to whether CDM 2015

applies to activities such as maintenance. Where the task in hand looks like building work, requires construction skills and uses construction materials, CDM 2015 is likely to apply. In this case, the job will need planning and there will be a need to ensure that adequate pre-construction information, such as asbestos surveys and service plans, are gathered so a practical and proportionate construction phase plan highlighting the real risks of the work is prepared and kept up-to-date.

CDM provides a management framework for all construction projects and there are opportunities within this for facilities management companies to review and streamline the management process. It should also be remembered that just because CDM might not apply, there is other legislation that seeks the same objective – to carry out work without, so far as reasonably practicable, causing harm.

So, who should be a PD? The regulations state it has to be a designer, but not necessarily a designer otherwise involved with the project. This allows for a ‘PD only’ appointment where necessary or desirable.

CDM 2015 states that the PD *must* plan, manage and monitor the pre-construction phase, identify eliminate and control foreseeable risks, and take into account the general principles of prevention. There is more emphasis than with CDM 2007, which required the now defunct CDM co-ordinator to *ensure* arrangements were in place.

Much of the PD role mirrors the designer duties under CDM 2015, which are essentially unchanged from CDM 2007. However, some designers were not aware of all their previous obligations, perhaps thinking that another party held the responsibility, e.g. the CDM co-ordinator. As such, in some instances the PD will need to explain these duties to designers, to ensure they are undertaken.

PDs need to be demonstrably active, attending design team meetings, communicating with the relevant parties, and recording design processes and outcomes.

Being a PD is about having the necessary skills, knowledge, training and experience. If you are on good terms with ERIC (eliminate, reduce, inform and control), have knowledge of the principles of prevention, and an understanding of the principles of design risk management, you may well be competent to take on the PD role.

If not, ensure that it is decided early on who is going to fulfil the role, rather than allowing somebody to become PD by default. Finally, remember that a PD should be appointed ‘as soon as is practicable’ in order to properly discharge their duties, i.e. at the start of the design process.





# Are clients ready for the smart building revolution?

Steve Martin, Head of Technical (Electrical Contractors' Association)

Just 20% of the UK's commercial buildings are considered to be 'smart' at present. It is likely that as this market grows, many building clients such as housing associations, local authorities and consultants, may not be ready for this technological revolution.

With this in mind, the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA), the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) and Scottish electrical trade body SELECT, launched a 'connected technology' survey for clients last year to help understand the current state of play.

Overall, there were 229 responses to the survey over a three-week period in November and December, including responses from facilities managers, in-house engineers, and end clients.

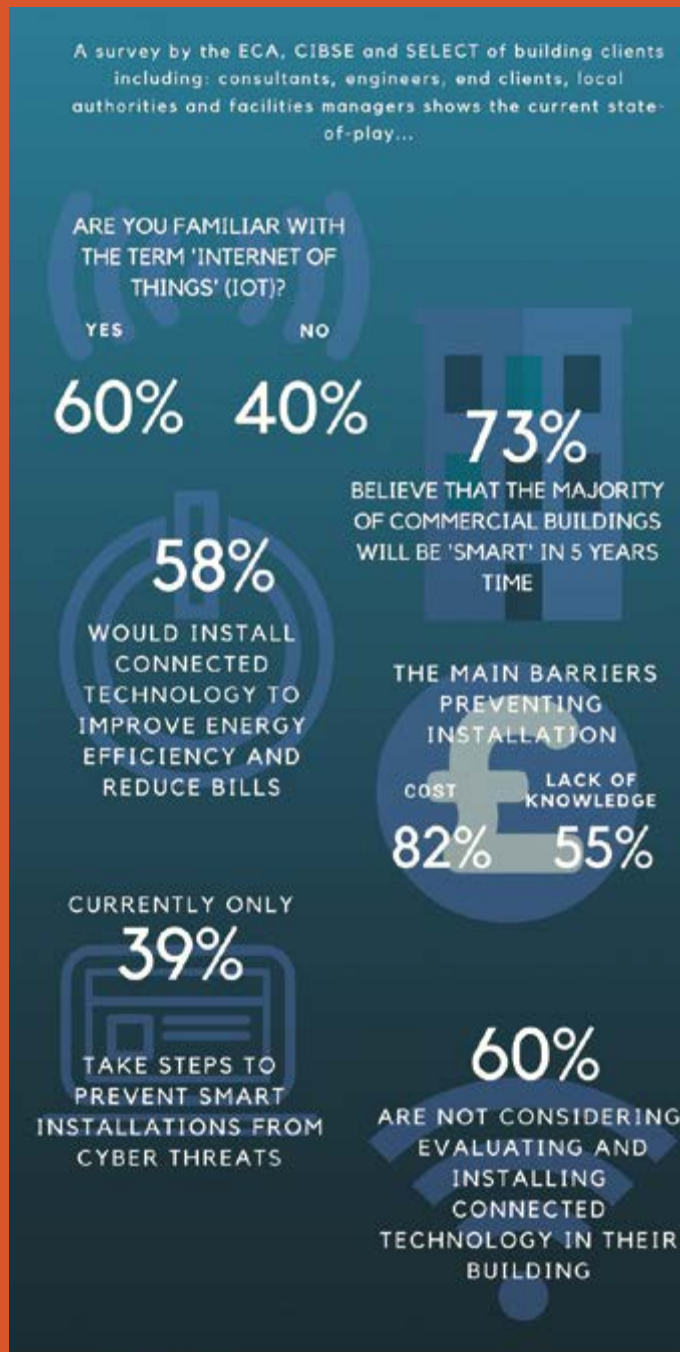
Significantly, four in 10 clients said they were 'not familiar' with the term the 'Internet of Things', which has become widely used in the industry in recent years. This shows that there is much more to be done in terms of raising awareness of the technology and opportunities that exist to clients.

Broadly speaking, respondents said that buildings across a range of sectors, including commercial, retail, and industrial, had at present adopted 'a limited amount' or 'very little' connected technology. Significantly, looking forward five years from now, over half of clients said that 'a significant or overwhelming majority' of buildings in the above sectors would have connected technology installed, highlighting the major opportunity that exists in the market right now.

In terms of the technologies themselves, 'CCTV and security' was highlighted as the technology most likely to be installed in buildings in five years' time (78% of respondents). Heating (74%), fire systems (69%) and 'building energy management systems' (67 %) also featured prominently on the list.

The main reason why clients said that they would be willing to install connected technology at present is to 'improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills' (58% said it was their top priority). However, with 'CCTV and security' the technology most likely to be installed over the next five years, there now appears to be a shift in attitudes towards prioritising safety and security.

**“ Just 20% of the UK's commercial buildings are considered to be 'smart' at present. It is likely that as this market grows, many building clients such as housing associations, local authorities and consultants, may not be ready for this technological revolution. ”**



In terms of the main barriers to installing connected technology in buildings, clients identified 'the cost of installing it' (82%) as the main one, with 'lack of clear advice / knowledge' (55%), and cyber security (49%) also considered major factors.

Perhaps tellingly, almost four in 10 clients (39%) said that they didn't take any steps to protect smart installations against cyber threats. This is an area clients urgently need to address, especially when you consider the inherent risks in the modern day of not securing your business from hackers, and the anticipated growth in smart installations over the next five years.

Given recent technological advances, such as lighting controls and smart meters, there is actually a growing need for clients to take a proactive role in the design of their buildings and systems. This will allow them to have access to the data and have the control they need, with an infrastructure to support it. Effectively, if clients have a comprehensive smart building solution designed and installed, this will allow for enhanced building monitoring and maintenance.

The ECA will now be looking to work with industry partners to establish how installers, engineers and clients, including housing associations, can work together more effectively on developing the connected buildings of the present and future.

# Property compliance and governance



**Lee Woods**, Operations Director (Pennington Choices Ltd)

**Compliance best practice – governance and leadership**  
Compliance needs to be a strategic priority. It is primarily about robust governance and strong effective leadership. Boards need to know what to look for and what to question. They should encourage a culture that is free to challenge and debate. There ought to be clear, persistent and regular communication about compliance, its importance and how it is being managed. In addition, the board must keep a firm grip on performance through a continuous cycle of checking and validating data. If required, boards should also engage proactively and positively with the regulator, particularly if they have a non-compliance issue.

**“ The freedoms that came with the introduction of co-regulation and the removal of the safety net of the audit commission’s inspection regime which told us how to do things in a prescribed way, has led to providers falling short of being fully compliant. ”**

Strong effective leadership is about ensuring there is clear ownership and accountability for compliance, as well as a robust management approach to policy, service delivery and performance. It is about harnessing a positive, open culture where people are not guarded about what they report and to whom.

## **So, has your organisation been lucky so far?**

At the end of March 2017, 38 housing associations had been downgraded and more could follow soon. The number of organisations that have voluntarily disclosed a property compliance issue to the HCA since the introduction of the regulatory framework and consumer standards is probably not as high as it should be.

The freedoms that came with the introduction of co-regulation and the removal of the safety net of the audit commission’s inspection regime which told us how to do things in a prescribed way, has led to providers falling short of being fully compliant. Most of the providers we have worked with evidence one or more of the most common compliance pitfalls. Some might suggest they have been lucky to avoid scrutiny so far!

## **Common compliance pitfalls**

As consultants, we work with housing providers to check to what extent they are carrying any compliance risks and any potential, or actual, gaps in compliance. We check compliance against current regulation, legislation and codes of practice in relation to asbestos, electric, fire, gas and water hygiene and beyond.

In our experience the common compliance pitfalls include:

- weak governance
- misguided assurance
- not knowing what to do to comply
- incomplete, missing and/or outdated policies
- limited or inaccurate reporting
- lack of asset/data validation

## **An effective compliance framework**

We promote eight key building blocks for effective compliance management:

- reporting and challenge at management and board level
- robust policies and procedures, which provide clarity on roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- compliant inspection programmes including ‘catch up’ programmes
- clear approach to the delivery/closeout of follow-up works
- central control of asset data and the development of a core system
- asset validation and security protocols
- procurement of qualified contractors and competent persons
- internal and external checks – for life and not just in a crisis!

## **And finally**

Prepare now – undertake a health check or gap analysis to identify where you are so that you can identify any non-compliance and plan accordingly. If you have non-compliance to address - act quickly, but in a considered way – and allocate resources to address the problem. Lastly, do not hesitate to seek advice and engage with the regulator if you feel your organisation has important issues to address.





## Keeping residents safe, warm and healthy

**Andrew Burke**, Associate (Rickaby Thompson Associates)  
& Adviser (NHMF)

Keeping residents safe, warm and healthy is increasingly challenging in the current operating environment and yet it should be a key objective of all social landlords. The NHMF's mission is to be the centre of excellence for improving property performance by promoting best practice in repairs, maintenance and asset management. It sees promoting and sharing best practice as essential for landlords and contractors to reduce operating costs and improve performance by learning from what works well and avoiding what does not work. To achieve this, the NHMF wants to foster through its annual conference and its website, a community for property professionals and practitioners that openly shares best practice and provides a resource for problem solving.

It also provides criteria for commissioning and carrying out risk assessments and managing risks. The fire safety case study explains how one social landlord is improving fire safety for its vulnerable and older residents while reducing operating costs.

The fuel saving section explains how to get governing body agreement for a fuel saving strategy becoming a key aspect of an organisation's business plan. With funding for such improvements much reduced, such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), many social landlords are not planning for or investing in fuel saving improvements, and yet fuel poverty is a growing concern among social landlords. This guide will help landlords develop a practical strategy to reduce fuel poverty as an integral part of the asset management programme rather than an optional add-on if funding is available. It then explains how to deliver the improvements and manage the risks successfully. Two best practice case studies were published at the beginning of the year. The first sets out the business and economic case for investing in fuel saving improvements based on research carried out by Sustainable Homes on reduced rent arrears, void periods and costs with more energy efficient homes (i.e. higher SAP ratings). The second case study explains how a local authority analysed the energy performance of its stock and the costs of fuel saving improvements against the risk of fuel poverty to determine the level of energy performance required to reduce these risks. Having been agreed by councillors and senior management, these property performance targets are now part of the council's business plan and integrated into its asset management and investment programmes.

To ensure landlords stay up to date, Q&A briefings are also being published to address changes to legislation and standards, such as the one on gas safety and HSE's proposed MOT style approach to annual gas safety checks. This briefing will be updated once the results of HSE's consultation are published and the gas safety legislation amended. A briefing has also been published on 'Each Home Counts', the Government commissioned independent review of consumer advice, protection, standards and enforcement for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Further case studies and briefings are planned for 2017, including a best practice case study on lift replacement and briefings on the revised PAS 2030 standard that will be required for the new ECO and Fuel Poverty regulations. Best practice training courses are also available.

**“ The NHMF's mission is to be the centre of excellence for improving property performance by promoting best practice in repairs, maintenance and asset management. ”**

There are two best practice sections on the NHMF website, one dedicated to compliance and the other to fuel saving improvements. These are designed specifically to help social landlords fulfil their legal obligations effectively and economically. They are being supplemented by a growing set of case studies and Q&A briefings that show how landlords have improved resident safety and health, while reducing operating costs.

The compliance section is structured with a set of topical guides summarising landlords' legal responsibilities for meeting essential statutory health and safety requirements. Each guide explains what is legally required and provides links to approved guidance so that landlords can review their compliance regimes from first principles.



# The NHMF study tour 2016: The island of Ireland



Liz Circuit, Secretary (NHMF)

The annual study tour has become an increasingly important fixture in the National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) calendar, as it provides an opportunity for members of the NHMF to liaise with, and learn from, colleagues involved in the provision of social housing in other countries. In 2016 the tour visited both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (RoI), bringing together colleagues from both sides of the border. It is always helpful to look at familiar problems from a different perspective, and as always, there was much to discuss. A major theme of the tour was considering how best to add social value and create social enterprise. A key development was the proposal for the formation of an all-Ireland branch of the NHMF.

The tour began on 12 October, with NHMF members from all over the UK meeting in the Titanic Centre in Belfast. The meeting was chaired by Shaun Aldis, who introduced the NHMF. Ward Erwin, Social Enterprise Manager from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) provided an insight into the socio-economic conditions of social housing communities in Northern Ireland. The NIHE is the largest provider of public housing in Ireland with about 86,000 properties. The goal of the NIHE is the development of economically vibrant and self-sustaining social housing communities through community led social enterprise which will create social capital and social value.

**“ The Forum will be open to all asset management and property services staff working in the social housing sector in the island of Ireland. ”**

Karl Linder, NHMF committee member and Planning & Investment Manager at Viridian Housing, then provided an overview on how Viridian Housing had improved asset management. There is increasing regulatory pressure on housing associations, with the Homes and Communities Agency pushing for them to show value for money. This is coupled with an increased need for housing associations to generate their own funding. This means that operational staff must be more commercially minded, and homes must be commercially sustainable. The biggest challenge is to access good quality data in order to rank homes on financial performance.





After the talks, the group was given a tour of the impressive exhibitions at the Titanic Centre, which included an accurate depiction of life in Belfast at the time that the Titanic was built, as well as recreations of the different classes of cabin, and other rooms on the ship.

The following morning, 13 October, the NIHE took the study tour on a coach ride through housing estates in Belfast. The group was given a tour of Belfast's segregated housing, and saw a number of peace walls and re-imagining projects. The peace walls were originally built by the NIHE to try to maintain the peace by keeping people apart. However since 2002, there have been talks to remove them, and one has now been taken down along the Crumlin road. Hopefully more will follow.

The study tour then travelled by coach to Dublin where the group visited Fold Housing Association and was given a talk about an innovative social housing project involving a fifty unit development representing a new approach to providing social housing for older people, combining private funding and local authority support. The remodelling of 39 units created state-of-the-art housing units for elderly couples and individuals on the foundations of an old development. The one bed and two bed modern and fully accessible apartments have access to an adjoining community centre. The project addressed problems of damp, heating costs, accessibility and also provided for further development in the future if funding becomes available. Clever use of space allowed additional infill units which provided more homes and

After lunch, the study tour travelled to Limerick, which lies on the river Shannon. The city's old town is known for its medieval era St Mary's Cathedral and St John's Square, lined with Georgian townhouses. The 13th century King John's castle is one of the city's most recognisable sites. After checking into the Absolute Hotel, the group went on a walking tour of the old town, visiting many of the sights highlighted above.

The following day, 14 October, the group convened at the Limerick Social Enterprise - Hospitality education and training centre, where Carmel Kirby, the Programme Manager at the Office for Regeneration for Limerick, explained how the county and city councils of Limerick had amalgamated in 2014 to form one Limerick council. Limerick has been working on regeneration projects since 2007, involving housing provision, bringing new industries to the town and tackling high levels of unemployment in the more deprived areas.

Bernadette Enright, who manages the education and training centre, then introduced the hospitality programme. The hospitality industry was in need of skilled chefs and hospitality staff, so it was decided to set up a training academy to take unemployed people from the estates and teach them the required skills. It opened its doors two years ago, and now provides 80 places, and its trainees are in high demand among hoteliers and vintners in the city.



improved the environment by shielding the community from the busy road and leaving it less exposed. The project has transformed the lives of residents as well as having units to offer to the homeless list.

The group also received a talk from Caren Gallagher from the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) who provided an outline of the social housing sector in the Republic of Ireland. Over 500 housing associations, the five oldest of which date back to the 1890s, provide around 27,000 homes. 276 of the associations are members of the ICSH. Until the 1980s they received 100% grant funding to develop family accommodation and more specialist housing. At their peak in 2009, they delivered 2,000 units in one year. After the financial crash grant funding was severely cut and the government asked associations to find ways to continue building using private finance.

There is a housing crisis in the Republic of Ireland with over 44,000 people on the housing list in Dublin alone in March 2016. The government has promised more than 27,000 houses over the next five years. However the responsibility of meeting this target has been largely placed on housing associations. It is difficult to see how this target will be met unless councils provide the associations with revenue subsidy.

Back at the hotel, the group received a talk from the Chief Executive of Limerick Council, Conn Murphy. He provided a picture of social housing in Limerick, in both a national and local context. Seamus O'Connor, the Director of Social Development, talked about the regeneration programme, and Seamus Hanna, the Senior Projects Manager, explained how the Rebuilding Ireland programme, worth €5.35 billion, would be implemented up to 2021.

Paul Isherwood, NHMF committee member and Director of Asset Management at Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), then presented the proposal for the creation of an all-Ireland branch of the NHMF to be used to promote good practice in social housing across the island of Ireland. Its aims and objectives are to share knowledge, information and experience, and to develop good practice in housing asset management, maintenance and estate regeneration. The Forum will be open to all asset management and property services staff working in the social housing sector in the island of Ireland. It will be led by a management committee of six to eight members, with equal representation from North and South, with 3 to 4 meetings a year.

This concluded what had been another interesting, thought provoking and successful study tour. Full details of this and previous study tours can be found at [nhmf.co.uk](http://nhmf.co.uk) where booking is open for the 2017 NHMF Study Tour.

# Achieving the sweet spot of delivering a successful repairs and maintenance service



**Rob Bryan**, Operations Director  
(Vantage Business Solutions)

With increasing pressure on housing providers to generate cross organisational cost savings, how do you find the balance of delivering a high quality repairs & maintenance (R&M) service whilst keeping a close eye on costs? With the recent trend of insourcing; the perceived security of outsourcing and the temptations of other 'innovative' models such as joint ventures, many providers are still trying to find the right model.

## Get the right fit

The "right" delivery model for a housing organisation is dependent on many factors. It is not just a case of listing the generic pros and cons of each model. For example, wholly owned subsidiaries have become more popular, but you shouldn't adopt models such as this without very careful consideration. The right model for each registered provider (RP) depends on core factors including geography, scale, key staff capabilities, your organisational culture, strategy and roadmap. We strongly recommend undertaking an options appraisal which assesses the health of the organisation across its roots. This will provide a snapshot of capabilities to truly understand which model will be the best fit and pave the way for genuine success. It is my view that an organisation which has strong roots could 'plug in' any R&M delivery model and make it work.

## Change hearts and minds

Our recent findings have shown there is a huge variation across the sector in performance especially across major works rates and in our comparisons of the top 150 RPs via our online tool Global Accounts Plus. There is no evidence to suggest that larger organisations can procure better rates than smaller RPs. Furthermore, we found that once a contract or internal service is in place, it can go off the boil very quickly.

The key to keeping it on track is the people you have in place and their capabilities. The sector is suffering from a skills shortage and one way to combat it is to embrace a mentoring and coaching programme. At the heart of this is embracing the right culture and performance management approach. Success or failure lies with a team and it relies on your ability to change hearts and minds.

## Make informed decisions

Along with coaching and upskilling the team, it is vital to involve team leaders and managers in setting KPIs, training them in how to manage staff to get the best performance and how to use data gathered from the service to make informed decisions. Up until 10 years ago there was very little R&M data available but now there is an abundance of it. If staff have the capacity to interpret and make decisions based on evidence, the service or the contract will stay on track. High performing RPs collect relevant data in a robust and controlled way. Data captured efficiently within the process of service delivery will provide confidence in the numbers and enable you to access performance indicators at the touch of a button. The power of this intelligence this cannot be underestimated as service success can be tracked, tweaked and managed continuously.

## Go beyond traditional procurement

If part of your service delivery model involves working with external contractors, make sure you go beyond your usual procurement approach. This means rethinking specifications, service level agreements and what added value you can gain from a contract. If you effectively scan the market to identify the supply chain and service you are seeking prior to the procurement process then you can use a more commercial approach to procurement to achieve that result. We encourage the use of setting proper target costs, but don't stop when you've procured great rates either. It is vital to continue to focus on contract management once the work has begun. If you procure great



## Spotlight on Broadacres Housing Association: Setting up a DLO for major works delivery

Broadacres Housing Association commissioned an options appraisal to review the feasibility, scale and capability of an internal delivery model. The result was a radically redefined approach, encompassing mobile solutions in IT, a private sector approach to performance management and training and mentoring staff across the whole organisation. The results delivered over £2 million per annum saving, as well as helping to shape Broadacres into a more resilient organisation.



## Spotlight on Midland Heart: Transforming external contracts

Midland Heart is now saving over £3 million per annum after the termination and re-tender of their gas servicing and installation contract following a commercial review of their external major works contracts.

"Terminating the old and outdated contracts and re-tendering for the service has allowed us to procure a model that is a far better fit for our current business needs. These are very significant savings that will represent a total of £30 million across the lifetime of the ten year contract - savings that we can invest back into our homes and communities." **Carl Larter, Executive Director of Assets.**



rates but don't involve the managers or upskill the team to effectively manage the contract, your hard work will be wasted.

## Measure the success

Many RPs struggle with how to evaluate different streams of the service in a hybrid model, making it difficult to assess which strands of the model are most efficient. Our advice is to be clear from the start on how you'll measure success and how to compare - using cost per unit for example as a metric, or the variation to the M3NHF Schedule of Rates. In addition, you need to be realistic on what you can compare, and how you will adjust for differing geographical regions or work mix. If you can be consistent and use actual costs you will be able to compare more accurately. The golden rule here is to measure against your organisational objectives and targets, and to blend your model to suit your needs.

Vantage are leaders in transformational change and R&M performance improvement in social housing. Let's discuss your options and see how much you could achieve. Find Rob on Twitter @RobBryanVantage





## Riverside Property MOT



**Mark Burnett**, Head of Repairs & Maintenance (Riverside Housing Group)

Since 2011, Riverside has worked on switching its maintenance delivery service from a reactive, demand driven service, to a proactive property MOT approach.

The property MOT approach was piloted in Mersey North, a division of Riverside consisting of circa 12,000 units representing around 22% of the group's stock.

The pilot was designed with a view to reducing the repairs demand across all of the division's stock, while also realigning the landlord/tenant relationship and gathering 100% stock condition data for future planning.

Following the successful validation of the pilot by Ark Housing Consultancy Ltd, a decision was taken at the end of 2016 to launch the initiative on a nationwide scale with a view to systematically undertaking an MOT on all of the relevant Group stock over a four year period.

Rather than simply reacting to repair issues when they arose, using both current and historic data analysis, we would target individual properties or neighbourhoods of properties that continually reported repair issues at high costs.

The Riverside MOT approach consists of the following stages:

- upfront data modelling/analysis and demand management
- restating of tenant responsibilities
- stock information survey (SIS)
- repairs survey
- tenant assessment
- post MOT repairs demand management

The upfront data modelling and analysis was developed internally and backed up by sound business assumptions. By referring to the current and historic repair data and repair monitoring, we have evidenced both repair reductions and a significant reduction in average repair values.

When the MOT is completed, we expect to see a significant reduction in repair activity and through demand management techniques, even with the initial cost of the MOT work, these reductions are turned into a saving over future years.

“ By referring to the current and historic repair data and repair monitoring, we have evidenced both repair reductions and a significant reduction in average repair values. ”

The SIS element of the MOT is used as an opportunity both to gather and validate data on stock condition and has started to inform and drive our investment projections over future years.

Our maintenance teams across the Group, working with the SIS, carry out a thorough and extensive repairs survey, agreeing with customers which repair issues will be addressed. This allows for expectations over future upgrades to their home to be managed and reminds customers what their repair obligations are as per their tenancy agreement.

The maintenance teams also take account of any tenancy related issues and signpost these to the relevant housing management team.

The MOT asked questions of asset management and stock investment, housing and tenancy management and customer service; the answering of which has offered a big opportunity for Riverside to understand better its asset and tenancy challenges, to join up service arms and make a fundamental change in operation for the benefit of the business and its customers.

The MOT approach was the main driver behind Riverside securing the prestigious CIH UK Housing Award in April 2017 for 'Outstanding approach to repairs & maintenance'.

## Driving efficiencies in the material supply chain



**Lara Cartledge**, Supply Chain Manager  
(Derby Homes)



“ We have moved from several different arrangements for buying building materials, with no real way of price checking and controlling spend, to procuring and mobilising a ‘one-stop-shop’. ”

**At Derby Homes we recently instigated a new approach to our supply chain arrangements for building materials.**

We have moved from several different arrangements for buying building materials, with no real way of price checking and controlling spend, to procuring and mobilising a ‘one-stop-shop’. We also implemented an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technology.

We are now working alongside our material supplier to identify areas for possible efficiencies, and investigating value for money alternatives. We are focusing on our top 50 items in terms of purchase value and purchase quantity, giving us approximately 70 products to review. We are also looking at materials from common suppliers.

Our material supplier is then looking at best price alternatives, along with any other factors which could offer us best value for money, such as improved warranties and better technical specifications. We will then sit down with our material supplier to evaluate the merits of each deal. Owing to the nature of some products and the deals available, some decisions can be made on the day based on the documentation. Other items will require narrowing down, and in these cases, the product manufacturer will be invited to present their product to Derby Homes. Proposed product changes will need to be tested in the field, and reviewed by tenant panels.

We are looking at whole life costings of certain items to evaluate:

- what the likely maintenance costs are
- how much the spares cost, what the predicted lifespan is
- how long it will take our tradespeople to install and maintain items
- how long manufacturers’ warranties are for and what they actually cover.

Once the potential alternatives for a product have been narrowed down, the material supplier will then arrange for us to meet with the suppliers. This allows us to review their product, and to ask any questions.

Derby Homes will then carry out trials of the products where both operatives and managers will give feedback on the product, taking into account both installation and financial assessments. If the trials meet the criteria set in the original tender, the product will be priced accordingly by the supplier and added to the core and van stock to be used by the operatives.

The other area currently endorsed is corporate social responsibility (CSR) from within our supply chain. We are currently working with our material supplier to use ‘positive action’ sessions, and the power of advertising vacancies at our store through Derby Homes’ social media.

The ‘positive action’ sessions will be held at our local branch, with our material supplier’s HR department on hand to help any tenants wishing to apply for local vacancies with CV writing sessions, talking to them about the current opportunities, and answering any general questions they have regarding employment. Our material supplier is also working with our local schools and communities to employ an apprentice in our store.

Derby Homes is also working with the broader supply chain to obtain help, support and donations, both of time and materials, for a large community project in one of our areas which is in desperate need of community improvement.



# Thamesmead condensation, damp and mould strategy



“ The objective of the CDM strategy is to manage condensation and mould in households whose homes may not be improved for several years. ”



**Peter Rickaby**, Director (Rickaby Thompson Associates) **Adam Fudakowski**, Managing Director (Switchchee)  
**Nic Wedlake**, Group Sustainability Manager (Peabody) **Simon Jones**, Commercial Director (Aereco)

## Peabody has developed a condensation, damp and mould (CDM) strategy for the Thamesmead estate in south-east London.

Thamesmead was built in the 1970s and provides over 4500 homes in high- and medium-rise concrete structures with pre-cast concrete cladding. In 2000 the original district heating was replaced by individual central heating systems, and most homes have relatively new double-glazed windows; otherwise, the estate has received limited investment. There is extensive fuel poverty: homes tend to be under-heated and under-ventilated. Condensation, damp and mould are common.

The termination of Crossrail at Abbey Wood, close to Thamesmead, heralds rising land values and new investment. Peabody has a Thamesmead regeneration programme that will deliver new homes and comprehensive refurbishment over thirty years, but inevitably many homes will not be replaced or improved for some time. The objective of the CDM strategy is to manage condensation and mould in households whose homes may not be improved for several years. The three-year strategy has three key features:

1. Risk assessment of homes, using data from a stock condition survey, SAP energy ratings, HHSRS ratings and occupancy information, to identify the homes most at risk. The CDM risk scores are used to identify high, medium and low risk homes.
2. Detailed surveys of medium and high risk homes to establish the extent of CDM, existing ventilation (if any) and the patterns of occupancy.
3. Three levels of intervention, based on the risk scores and survey data:
  - For low-risk homes: customised energy advice delivered face-to-face and in printed form by Peabody's in-house advice team; all households will receive advice
  - For medium-risk homes: energy advice and a smart heating controller. The *Switchchee* device, which is designed for social housing, has been adopted
  - For high-risk homes: energy advice, a smart heating controller and an Aereco demand-controlled mechanical extract ventilation (MEV) system

The *Switchchee* smart heating controller is designed for social housing. It has the usual smart functions: it senses occupancy and turns off the heating when the home is unoccupied; it 'learns' the occupancy pattern



and anticipates demand for heat; and it controls the temperature to the set level. *Switchchee* can operate autonomously, without residents intervening, or they can adjust the setting. The device also displays whether heat is being called for and how long it will take the home to reach the set temperature.

The key feature of *Switchchee*, for the CDM strategy, is that it monitors the home and makes data available to Peabody via an online 'dashboard'. The device monitors occupancy, temperature, relative humidity (RH), use of the heating system and the thermostat setting. The *Switchchee* software calculates indicators such as how long a home takes to heat up by 1°C, and can flag homes that are underheated or overheated, or which have high RH levels (indicating risk of CDM).

The ability of the *Switchchee* smart heating controller to operate autonomously is beneficial in homes where residents do not engage with the CDM problem. The monitoring facility is a powerful tool: it allows homes at risk of CDM to be identified and targeted, energy advice to be customised, and the effect of improvements to be monitored.

The ventilation system chosen for the CDM strategy is an Aereco demand-controlled centralised mechanical extract ventilation system. This consists of a central, quiet, constant-pressure fan that extracts moist stale air from kitchens and bathrooms via RH sensitive grilles and exhausts it to the exterior; this is combined with RH sensitive air inlets in living rooms and bedrooms. The system runs continuously and the ventilation rate is controlled by internal RH: the more humid the air the higher the ventilation rate. The system responds to RH between 35% (minimum ventilation) and 75% (maximum ventilation).

The Thamesmead CDM strategy adopts a systematic, evidence-based approach to the pernicious problem of CDM. It is a ground-breaking initiative to improve on the 'just stick in a fan' approach that has been common in social housing. The first pilot installations have recently been evaluated, and the strategy will be rolled out across Thamesmead during the next two years.

# Procuring IT at the heart of service delivery



**Peter Long**, Repairs Service Manager (Basildon Borough Council)

After a procurement process spanning a 14 month period, Basildon Council awarded their new strategic asset management contract to Morgan Sindall Property Services in January 2016. Responsive repairs, planned and cyclical works, gas servicing and new gas installations were all to be included.

This was something very new for Basildon and considered to be high risk by some. We heard the term “all our eggs in one basket” often, but it was felt this was the right decision. The contract was scheduled to start on 1 July 2016.

Mobilisation of the contract began in February 2016. We had always experienced difficulties with using multiple systems, and interfaces had never proved reliable. During these discussions, it was agreed that there were significant benefits in the Council adopting Morgan Sindall's IT system (MSi). The system is based on a Microsoft Dynamics platform and widely used by Basildon Council already.

Some of the benefits of this new approach were the elimination of all electronic interfaces, all information for customer updates was in one location, real time information visible in dashboards, full mobile solution for all operational staff which reduced the need for administration and a simple invoicing process. An existing project for a new housing management system for Property Services was abandoned.

A dedicated ICT group was formed, made up of all relevant people from Morgan Sindall Property Services and Basildon Council. This group's initial focus was to provide a system that would be required from day one of the contract and was bespoke to the client's needs. A decision to share office accommodation helped simplify this system development.

Full shared use of the system was achieved on the first day of the contract. All other departments within the Council had the ability to track repair orders via a separate “read only” web portal.

**“ We benefit from performance and financial information from one system and are on target to save over £1 million in the first year of this 15 year contract. ”**

This has reduced a significant number of calls between departments requesting status updates for repair orders.

Following the start of contract, a different user group was established to develop MSi further. The group now meet regularly to review progress and to promote any new initiatives.

Although we have real time dashboards, we are not able to generate individual reports within set parameters (e.g. between first and last day of the month).

All KPI data is validated directly from MSi.



It had also been identified during the tender process that we would need a customer portal. We are now in the process of building separate tenant and leaseholder web portals, which will provide users with full tracking of repair orders and the booking of appointments. The leaseholder portal will also show expenditure associated to the repairs to each block.

We are exploring the use of 'live chat' within the portals for our tenants and leaseholders. Further development will provide us with 'heat maps'. These show concentration of repairs and costs, a range of reports for performance and budget monitoring.

All Morgan Sindall sub-contractors have access to their own portal. It is our intention that all direct contractors currently working for the Council will receive their orders via this portal.

While there is no interface, there is a simple file transfer between MSi and Keystone Asset Management system. This provides updates on planned works elements, asbestos information and future programmes.

A survey template has been developed for the engineers' mobile tablets. This will enable them to collect real time stock condition survey information. Again, this is a simple file exchange not an electronic interface.

Although all information is processed in MSi, a regular extract is taken and uploaded into our Dynamics system providing a full history of all transactions.

We have reduced administration in the Property Services team and are able to provide clearer information to our customers than previously. We benefit from performance and financial information from one system and are on target to save over £1 million in the first year of this 15 year contract.



## How can technology support stock condition surveys?

aerial photographs of the front and rear elevations and roofs of street properties and blocks of flats.

The images from both systems offer a cost effective method for an asset manager to carry out a detailed inspection, with photographic evidence, of the entire envelope of a property without scaffolding, working at height or disturbing the customers.

Some of the benefits include:

- reduction in site visits (reducing disruption to customers) – where images can be used for desktop analysis
- identifying where no works are required and the property can be pushed further out in the cyclical maintenance schedule
- increasing the speed of tendering as the images can be provided to contractors and third party surveyors
- identifying where works are required so that a detailed specification can be made and prioritised
- providing cost certainties and accurate budgeting prior to project commencement
- detailing the specification can reduce the contingency element and reduce the variations over the course of a program
- providing evidence for long leaseholders (S20 notices) to demonstrate why works are required and provide accurate costings
- scaffolding will be up for less time, which benefits the customer
- aerial images can be captured post works completion to validate the works.

### Use of UAVs (drones)

Solon has found benefits which include:

- speeding up the inspection process for roof related work
- improved safety for surveyors and tenants
- reduced complaints associated with scaffolding
- significant savings on scaffold costs
- giving additional control on specifying works and controlling budgets.

The limitations include:

- weather dependency for drone operations
- there can be control interference by electric pylons/mobile phone masts
- some sites are unsuitable (mainly where control of the flight area can't be achieved)
- training/ licensing process can take time and has an initial cost outlay.

Solon is finding the UAV a very useful tool to understand the condition of stock and diagnosing/specifying repairs better. It is saving time and money as well as improving customer service in the resolution of some complicated repairs.

### Use of van based camera masts

The mast mounted vans are generally used in towns and cities where the use of UAVs are restricted owing to the operatives ability to have control over the survey area.



**Mark Pickance**, Director (Upshot UK Ltd) & **Richard James**, Director of Development and Asset Management (Solon South West Housing)

**It is essential that landlords have a good understanding of their assets in order to support the provision of excellent customer service, value for money, to ensure statutory obligations are met and a strategic approach to asset management is achieved.**

**“It is saving time and money as well as improving customer service in the resolution of some complicated repairs.”**

Solon and Upshot's presentation at the 2017 NHMF conference focused on how new technologies can assist with cyclical maintenance projects and responsive maintenance surveys. The images captured by cameras on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or drones) or van based camera masts enable an asset manager to evaluate hard to access areas to ensure works are required and accurately specify and cost repairs required without the need for scaffolding or cherry pickers.

Solon is a Registered Provider with 1300 affordable homes mainly in Bristol & South Gloucestershire and has been using a UAV for mainly responsive surveys since 2016.

Upshot UK Ltd provides housing associations and councils with ground based aerial photography for stock condition and validation surveys for cyclical maintenance roof programmes. Using a combination of vans with centrally mounted masts specifically designed for working in cities and UAVS, the state of the art camera systems capture high definition



## New data protection law coming soon – are you prepared?

Jane Burns, Solicitor (Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP)

A new EU data protection law, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force in the UK on 25 May 2018 and is likely to stay, despite 'Brexit'. It is set to make some quite significant changes to the way that organisations handle (process) the personal information of individuals (personal data).

Some of the key changes include:

- the 'mega-fine' of €20 million or 4% of annual global turnover (whichever is higher) for the most serious data protection breaches committed by both data controllers and/or their data processors
- increased compliance obligations for both controllers and processors – including the requirement for a statutory Data Protection Officer to be appointed by both data controllers and data processors in certain circumstances
- greater transparency of processing of individuals' personal data with increased rights for individuals in relation to the personal data held by data controllers and data processors
- mandatory reporting of data breaches – within 72 hours
- requirements for data processors to co-operate to a much greater extent with their data controllers in relation to the personal data shared with them
- expanded definition of consent which means that data controllers will need to review processing based upon this legal ground and consider whether an alternative ground for processing may be more applicable.

### What will this mean for Registered Providers of social housing (RPs) and their contractors?

Under the DPA, any organisation which processes the personal data of individuals for its own business purposes will be a data controller in relation to that personal data. Therefore both RPs and their contractors are also likely to be data controllers, at least in relation to the personal data of their staff.

The current requirement for data controllers to register with the regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), unless an exemption applies, is to be removed under the GDPR. The 'trade-off', however, is a much greater compliance paperwork burden.

### Implications for service contracts

Under both the existing law and the GDPR, where a RP shares its tenants' personal data with a third party contractor, on the understanding that the contractor is to act only on the instructions of the RP in relation to the processing of those tenants' data, the contractor is likely to be a data processor, with the RP being the data controller.

“ the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force in the UK on 25 May 2018 and is set to make some quite significant changes to the way that organisations handle (process) the personal information of individuals. ”

Where, however, the RP expects the contractor to carry out their duties with a considerable degree of autonomy - with the result that the contractor is required to make independent substantive decisions in relation to the processing of the tenants' data, they are likely to be a separate data controller in relation to the processing of that personal data, regardless of what any service contract might stipulate. Neither the DPA nor the GDPR allow organisations to 'contract out' of their data protection obligations.

Under the current law, it is a legal requirement that there is a legally binding written contract in place, between data controller and data processor, which contain the mandatory data processing clauses. This is usually achieved by inserting the clauses into the main service contract or by the parties entering into a separate data processing contract.

However, the GDPR introduces a much greater number of mandatory data processing clauses which translate into a greater number of obligations imposed upon data processors.

Data processors will also be directly liable, for the first time, for breaches of the law for which they are wholly or partially responsible - and they may be subject to direct enforcement action by the ICO or to civil claims for compensation by affected individuals.

To get to grips with the changes, we would recommend that both RPs and contractors quickly and carefully review their current processing, including the terms of existing service contracts - and consider the extent to which these may require renegotiation in order to accommodate the new requirements of the GDPR.





## If you build it, they will come

Anna O'Halloran, Managing Director (Consultancy) Just Housing Group

The Kevin Costner fans among us might remember that very odd film from the 1980s 'Field of Dreams', where a ghostly vision told Costner's farmer character to build a baseball pitch in his field of corn, and if he did, 'they' would come.

“ Behavioural insights is all about understanding why people behave in the way that they do and then using tried and tested methods designing some interventions to encourage people to make different choices. ”

This 'building and waiting' is something I often seen organisations do when they start to think about their digital agenda or channel shift. Great online tools but scarcely any work undertaken to get consumers to use them.

I am currently working with eight or so housing providers to improve their success rates in achieving channel shift through applying a 'behavioural insights' approach. Behavioural insights is all about understanding why people behave in the way that they do and then using tried and tested methods designing some interventions to encourage people to make different choices. In a channel shift context it could be to shift from reporting repairs by phone to reporting repairs online.

Along with colleagues, my work in the last two years has been all about using behavioural insights to encourage the customers of social housing providers to make different choices – choices that include:

- rent payment
- undertaking their own repairs
- complying with gas safety appointments
- not causing anti-social behaviour
- engaging with their landlord

In order to achieve these results we need to gather together evidence of what's currently going on: things like WHO is causing the problem through extensive data analysis; finding out WHY they are causing the problem through qualitative insight collection; and then using this EVIDENCE to design a new approach using behavioural insights principles. These principles remind us that in many instances what people do is very often predictably irrational and not in their own self-interest.

This work has revealed that when tackling a channel shift problem we need to know the answers to the following:

- ✓ **ACCESS** – is the channel available to the tenant?
- ✓ **AWARENESS** – is the tenant aware of the channel?

- ✓ **TRUST** – does the tenant trust the channel, and the organisation?
- ✓ **MOTIVATION** – what benefits will the tenant get from using the channel?
- ✓ **ABILITY** – does the tenant have the required skills / equipment?
- ✓ **EXPERIENCE** – does the channel offer a superior customer experience?

If we can answer these questions, then the final piece of the jigsaw become available to us:

- ✓ **TRIGGER** – what can we do to nudge the tenant into trying the channel?

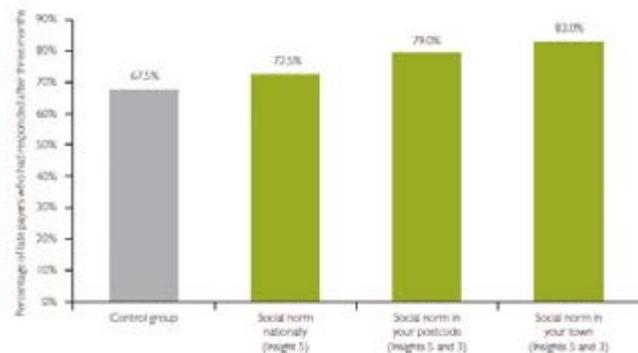
The triggers will vary and depend upon the answers to the first six questions. We can learn from people who are already using the organisations preferred channel and use these positive experiences to help us with the triggers.

'I report my repairs online because I can do it anytime – even in the middle of the night'

'Reporting my repair by email gives me a record of my report, this is helpful because in the past my landlord has not recorded my report made by the phone'

To design our triggers we use a part of behavioural insights often known as 'Nudge', an approach first coined by Thaler and Sunstein in 2008 in their book 'Nudge'. A nudge needs to be a choice not a mandate; but a choice presented in such a way that it can be avoided, but is unlikely to be. Our own HMRC used a nudge about what the social norm was to achieve increased payments of tax:

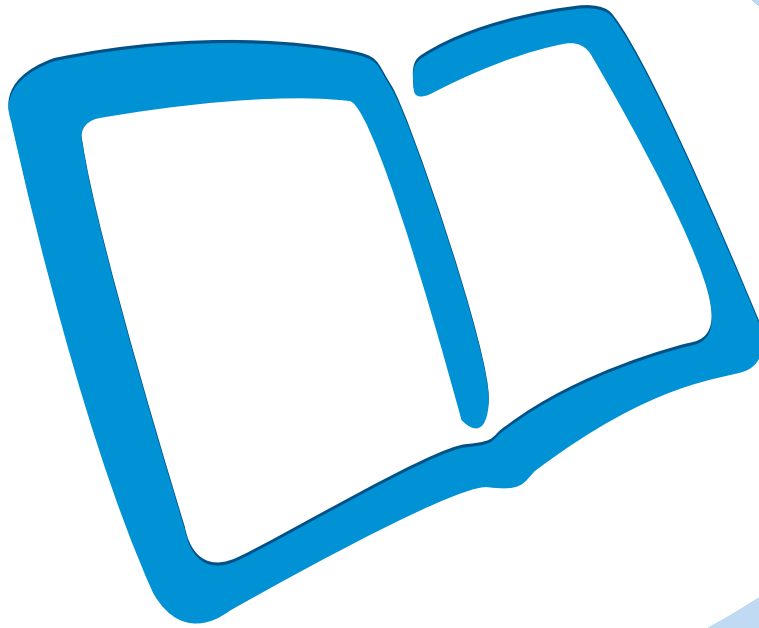
Trial 1a: Using social norms to increase tax debt payments



Our work incorporates similar interventions.

### Beware the unintended consequences!

The cost of the new channel. We have found that many organisations have not assessed the 'true' costs? For example, does the new channel create an outbound call to arrange an appointment? What might be unintended consequences of tenants actually using the new channel? For example, we have found that tenants who already report repairs on line report MORE repairs than those who report by other means.



**Dominic Higgins**, Associate Director (Rand Associates)

Every year we tour the country talking and training on the use of the M3NHF Schedule of Rates (SoR), and we always hear insightful views on aspects of the system that present challenges to clients and service providers alike. The tussle between the client, who wants best price, and the provider, who wants the best return, is the line that the SoR helps everyone to tread.

When I first listened to the training Rand Associates provides on managing a responsive repairs service or programmed works under the SoR contract, I noted four key words. They all began with the letter C, and they summarise what is needed to understand the process.

**Commonality** – a tap is a tap, it may be upstairs, downstairs, very old, very new – but stopping the drip is the common factor in any situation. Some sensible calculation can be made to arrive at an accurate requirement of the resources needed to sort it out.

**Consideration** – 30 years in the making, regularly modified through user feedback, jobs have been broken down into labour and materials elements and then consolidated to give a single rate. This approach has continued to deliver a stronger, more resilient product. Although there is always room for improvement, at the end of the day, the SoR continues to deliver a robust solution to most works orders.

**Completeness** – when we describe a job the description is saying – ‘do everything required to satisfy the job’. There is no need to add another job on to something just because it exists on the menu of tasks. The concept is simple – just do everything required to complete the task.

**Consequential** – This is very much linked to my previous point, we want people to ask ‘is this activity a consequence of the job that was ordered?’ If the answer is yes, then the addition of another code is incorrect. Everything is deemed to be included.

## Balancing payments under the M3NHF Schedule of Rates

“ The concept is simple – just do everything required to complete the task. ”

Given the complex nature of the range of work involved and the various influences that have shaped the SoR over time, one may be forgiven for believing that it is final and finished. We would certainly not be of that opinion and as testament to our commitment to user engagement we are constantly challenging the product to make improvements. The flexibility for users to make bespoke edits has always been there, and further allows the product to work in different environments. It is also worth remembering that this is model documentation which can be taken off the shelf and tailored to meet the needs of different organisations and how they operate. It has been used to support the many different approaches to service delivery which are evolving in response to the changing economic and political environment. Our continuing appetite for sector engagement and customer satisfaction is demonstrated through engagement with the NHMF Committee and the NHMF Contractor Forum who regularly comment on proposed changes and modifications to the documentation.



# The NHMF Best practice award winners 2017



**Karl Linder**, Planning & Investment Manager  
(Viridian Housing) & Deputy Chair (NHMF)

This is the fifth year that I have chaired the judging panel for the NHMF awards. The NHMF committee works hard to promote and share excellent performance and innovation in the industry and sees the awards as a great way of showcasing success.

For an organisation to win an award, it must demonstrate not only that it has provided good asset management services to its customers, but that it also holds value for money initiatives at the heart of its asset management strategy. Every year the task of the judges gets harder as we receive more and more entries detailing commendable projects.

In 2017 we gave out six awards documented on the next two pages.



# 2017 AWARDS



## NHMF training days 2017

### What are they?

The NHMF offers a series of one day training courses to support both clients and contractors. The sessions are applicable to property services directors, asset management directors and members of their teams who are directly involved in or may be considering procuring or managing contracts under the M3NHF Schedule of Rates documentation and associated modules. They are particularly valuable if clients and their contractors attend together.

Visit [nhmf.co.uk/training](http://nhmf.co.uk/training) for more information

# The NHMF Best practice award winners 2017

## NHMF Best client award

Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd



Over the last six years Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (CCG) has invested over £136m to deliver its Welsh Quality Housing Standard (WHQS) improvement programme. CCG divided the WHQS investment work, with almost half the contracts available to local trade contractors, and the remainder to one main service provider. The contracts were awarded for four years offering more stability and continuity. It provided an opportunity for the contractors to employ more staff, trainees, apprentices, and to grow as businesses. This carefully documented and externally audited project has brought work and training opportunities to the local area. The learning from the project will be used to improve existing homes and build new ones.

## NHMF Best small client award

Shropshire Rural Housing Association



Shropshire Rural Housing Association (SRHA) adopted Kensa Heat Pumps' micro ground source heat network design to roll out installations in both their retrofit and new build housing stock on one site; it is the first time the system has been employed on one site covering both existing and new builds. The residents benefit from up to 50% running cost savings and significant improvements in comfort and control, while SRHA benefits from low lifetime ownership cost and RHI income. Shropshire Rural Housing Association has shown how micro ground source heat network systems can alleviate high heating bills and asset management costs in both existing and new build social housing stock.

## NHMF Best contract award

Anchor Housing Trust



This innovative contract combines a unique operational concept with an open book commercial model including a gain share mechanism which motivates Anchor Housing Trust and Keepmoat to deliver an efficient, quality service bespoke to the customer needs. The contract delivers repairs and maintenance to Anchor's 260 retirement properties and specialist care homes via repair days. Each location is visited by a multi-skilled operative every 10 days. This model drives efficiencies through a reduction in emergencies, travel time and administration. The results are transparent via the cost model, and savings are re-invested for the benefit of customers. A really good approach that has not been seen in this context before, which also delivers a positive environmental impact.

## NHMF Most improved asset management service award - One Vision Housing



One Vision Housing's asset management team has developed a new commercial model. By bringing a repairs and maintenance provider, a planned works contractor, a waste management provider as well as a trade supplier in-house, it can now offer a complete service. This allows for total control over the quality, efficiency and cost without having to deal with external contractors. The financial benefits are passed on to the customers and the financial savings of £5.8m were reinvested in the business. This is an interesting and innovative approach which has the potential to deliver significant savings.





## NHMF Best customer impact award Housing Plus Group



The MOT Smarter Home Improvement project is an innovative way for the repairs facility to maintain service standards and deliver improved asset management for the Housing Plus Group. During an MOT visit every home in the area will receive a check-up. Work typically includes minor external repairs and painting, cleaning and repairing gutters, re-laying uneven slabs on pathways, minor fence and gate repairs. As a result of this project residents feel greater pride in their homes and neighbourhoods. Every customer sees benefit from planned maintenance investment. A good project, with strong supporting evidence on costs and customer satisfaction benefits.

## NHMF Project of the year award Northern Ireland Housing Executive



**A contentious community interface on the Crumlin Road in Belfast has been transformed by a partnership between local communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.**

A previously derelict, austere peace wall location has been regenerated into a high quality shared space, transforming not only the physical environment, but also the surrounding communities. This project has been hailed as best practice in not only how to engage segregated, disaffected communities but also how to create an environment in which communities can take pride in and thrive. A great project which extends beyond social housing and asset management in Northern Ireland. It will have a major impact on the communities and community cohesion.



# 2017 AWARDS

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# Acronyms

We have tried, where possible, to ensure that acronyms are explained within articles. For those instances where this was not possible, however, here we have listed some commonly used acronyms.



Acronym	Explanation
AHBs	Approved Housing Bodies
ACOP	Approved Code of Practice
ALMO	Arm's-Length Management Organisation
BPE	Innovate UK Building Performance Programme
CDM	Construction (Design and Management) Regulations
CRM	Customer Relationship Manager
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSV	Cost Sharing Vehicle
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
DLO	Direct Labour Organisation
ECA	Electrical Contractors' Association
ECO	Energy Company Obligation
EDI	Electronic Data Interchange
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
ESDN	European Single Notification Documents
ESF	Electrical Safety First
EU	European Union
EWI	External wall insulation
Ffi	Fee for Intervention
GLAs	Greater London Authorities
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HHRNSH	High Heat Retention Night Storage Heaters
HHSRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
HSENI	Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland
HSW	Health and Safety at Work
HSWA	Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
JCT	Joint Contracts Tribunal
JV	Joint Venture
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KTN	Knowledge Transfer Network
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LGSR	Landlords Gas Safety Record
LIHC	Low Income Housing Coalition
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
MEV	Mechanical Extraction Ventilation system
MMC	Modern Methods of Construction
MVHR	Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery system
NEC	New Engineering Contract
NHF	National Housing Federation
NHMF	National Housing Maintenance Forum
NPV	Net Present Value

Acronym	Explanation
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
OJEU	Official Journal of the European Union
PPP	Price per Property
PPR	Painting, Plastics and Repair
PQQ	Pre-qualification Questions
PRS	Private Rented Sector
PV	Photovoltaic
QLTA	Quality Long Term Agreement
rdSAP	Reduced Data Standard Assessment Procedure
RH	Relative Humidity
RHI	Renewable Heat Incentive
RTB	Rent to Buy
RP's	Registered Providers
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure
SHIFT	Sustainable Homes Index for Tomorrow
SIS	Stock Information Survey
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMV	Standard Minute Values
SoR	Schedule of Rates
STPC	Specialist Term Partnering Contract
SWI	Solid Wall Insulation
TLO	Tenant Liaison Officer
TPC	TPC 2005 ACA Standard Form of Contract for Term Partnering - Amended 2008
TSC	Term Services Contract
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (in other words a Drone)
UPVC	Un-plasticised Poly Vinyl Chloride
WOS	Wholly Owned Subsidiary



**Introduction to the NHMF Contractor Forum**

The National Housing Maintenance Forum's (NHMF) Contractor Forum was established in 2012 for contractors working in the field of social housing, with the aim of creating closer working relationships between contractors, clients and sub-contractors. The forum works closely with the NHMF in promoting good practice in the procurement and management of repairs.

For many years the NHMF has had at least one contractor represented on its committee to ensure that it understands fully the contractor's perspective when developing the M3NHF Schedule of Rates and

related products. Contractors have also been involved in various training sessions and working groups to promote good practice. The NHMF is keen to involve contractors at an earlier stage in the consultation process when developing the schedules and diagnostic systems that are now used by nearly all social housing providers; it feels that it would benefit from their wide practical experience. Members also support and contribute to sessions at the annual NHMF Maintenance Conference.

For current membership and to join, visit [nhmf.co.uk](http://nhmf.co.uk)

**NHMF Committee**

The National Housing Maintenance Forum (NHMF) is managed by a committee representing each region of the UK and different types of users. It is elected at an annual general meeting held at the NHMF Maintenance Conference.

The committee controls funds raised from the annual licence fees on the M3NHF Schedule and related products. Any funds not required to keep the products up to date with changing demands are used to promote best practice in maintenance.



**Chair: Shaun Aldis**  
(Wolverhampton Homes)



**Deputy chair: Karl Linder**  
(Viridian Housing)



**Treasurer: Jon Cross**  
(Essenjay Associates)



**Secretary: Liz Circuit**  
(M3)

**2016 NHMF Committee**

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Paul Allen  
Andrew Burke  
Karen Cannon  
Stephen Chalmers  
Liz Circuit (Secretary)  
Jon Cross (Treasurer)  
Steve Downing  
Pauline Graham  
Declan Hickey  
Paul Isherwood

Wolverhampton Homes  
Merthyr Valleys Homes  
NHF (Retired)  
Walsall Housing Group  
Kingsdale Group  
M3  
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Rand Associates  
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Viridian Housing  
Magna HA  
Basildon BC  
Methodist Homes  
National Housing Federation  
Rand Associates  
Savills (UK)  
Morgan Sindall Property  
Services  
Southern HG  
Hanover HA

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National Housing  
Maintenance Forum

# NHMF Maintenance Conference

What is it?

An annual conference devoted to housing maintenance and run by maintenance professionals. It covers strategic issues and provides a focus for networking and promoting best practice.

When is it?

The next conference will be held on Tuesday 23 & Wednesday 24 January 2018.

Where is it?

Hilton Birmingham Metropole (NEC)

Who will be speaking?

Speakers will include experts from a wide range of relevant specialist fields. We will hear from those in Government departments, National Housing Federation, Chartered Institute of Housing, resident providers, contractors, experienced consultants and professionals. Our speakers share a passion for playing their part in delivering good quality, affordable housing in the UK.

Why should I be there?

This is the one chance in the year to attend an event devoted to topics that are of concern to Asset managers and Directors of property services. We look at what is new, what works well and follow innovations proposed in earlier years to see what happened. It is an opportunity to share ideas and test your own views on colleagues facing the same set of challenges.



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