



Category: **Best Client**

the client organisation that was best at meeting resident's needs in the provision of a maintenance service



Bournville
VILLAGE TRUST

SERVING COMMUNITIES SINCE 1900

Better Living

1

What is innovative about the service provided?



1.3 Tenant Satisfaction: All satisfaction indicators are 100%.

Table 1:

Question	% of positive responses
Satisfaction with any dealings with BVT staff?	100%
Satisfaction with conduct and courtesy of people carrying out the work?	100%
Satisfaction with the way the home was left during the work?	100%
Satisfaction with the way the home was left on completion of the work?	100%
Satisfaction with the standard of work on completion?	100%
Overall satisfaction with the process from start to finish?	100%

Table 2:

Question	Contractor 1	Contractor 2	Contractor 3
Satisfaction with any dealings with BVT staff?	100%	100%	100%
Satisfaction with conduct and courtesy of people carrying out the work?	100%	100%	100%
Satisfaction with the way the home was left during the work?	100%	100%	85%
Satisfaction with the way the home was left on completion of the work?	100%	100%	77%
Satisfaction with the standard of work on completion?	100%	100%	100%
Overall satisfaction with the process from start to finish?	100%	100%	85%

This Planned Maintenance service provided by BVT to our residents has been proven to be among the most effective in the country, the key indicator for this being our very pleasing levels of customer satisfaction for the way our planned programmes are implemented.

Bournville Village Trust is small community based housing association of around 2500 properties, ranging from 1 bedroom apartments to listed buildings on a conservation area, and a broad range of property types in between. BVT maintenance surveyors have carried out stock condition surveys of all of our properties, so programmes are formed 100% on primary data.

Having achieved the decent homes standard and working towards surpassing it, BVT has a dedicated planned maintenance team consisting of four surveyors that deliver all planned upgrades for the entire estate, including across a range of diverse managed societies, sheltered accommodation and numerous local almshouses.

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For example, table 1 has been lifted from the 2010 satisfaction survey for kitchen modernisations:

Table 2 refers to satisfaction data collected following the 2010 rewire programme. (Which of course usually suffers greatly in customer opinion due to the nature of the work and lack of customer benefit when compared to works such as kitchens.)

So effective has the maintenance client function been at involving our residents in maintenance management, that it was recently featured as a case study in a Parliamentary Select Committee (DCLG) to highlight the importance of tenant influence in the process of achieving Decent Homes.



These positive results from the independent poll of our customer's opinion have been achieved by adopting a clear strategy that includes a range of innovative techniques. This range of techniques is focussed on how to ensure that our residents have the most positive experience possible.

Bournville Village Trust recently completed our most comprehensive data collection project since our inception in 1900. Spanning two years, and involving a team of interviewers and analysts, BVT has now managed to collect data from households across our community about who they are, what their needs are and how best BVT can deliver services to meet those needs.

Collecting data does not in itself automatically translate into improved services; for this to be the case it is imperative that internal systems communicate with each other to enable a holistic strategy to come to fruition. BVT has achieved this by ensuring that all demographic data collected through our census, converges through one single electronic system, known as "Contact Management". This means that all of our officers across the organisation are consistent in the way they approach residents.

Our contact management system provides an initial starting point which provides our officers with everything they need to know to adapt their approach to suit the given residents needs. Contact management will then link through into specialist systems, whether it is rent accounts, condition data for the property, our main filing system or even our asbestos register.

Having such a holistic corporate approach to the way BVT administers it's services has been a blessing to our Planned Maintenance department who are passionate about delivering upgrade programmes that are not only of maximum benefit to our residents, but are properly targeted where most needed and as cost effective as possible.

In addition to utilising our census data to tailor our service delivery to suit our individual resident's needs, the client function of BVT consults regularly with a panel of residents who have an interest in maintenance. So effective has the maintenance client function been at involving our residents in maintenance management, that it was recently featured as a case study in a **Parliamentary Select Committee (DCLG)** to highlight the importance of tenant influence in the process of achieving Decent Homes.

In this forum, our residents identified that our decent homes strategy should achieve a number of key benefits.

Specifically, these included:

- **Minimise stress** through excellent provision of information in a range of formats. Making sure residents are aware of the support that is available to them is crucial in eliminating unnecessary worry and to enable residents to prepare themselves properly in advance and during works
- Surveyors to carry out **pre-inspections** in advance of all major planned works to ensure the service is adapted to **meet the specific individual needs of the resident** in question
- Ensure that there is an extensive range of options in all planned works and residents **understand the choices** available to them. Crucially, residents have appropriate support from BVT Surveyors to ensure that they make the best possible choices for them and their home
- Provide residents with background to how programmes are formed to **promote the notion of fairness** across our community, in how limited resources are allocated
- Ensure that residents understand that **resident representatives are involved in shaping the maintenance service** and holding officers to account at every step of the process. And how they can influence and affect change themselves, should they want to.

From experience, we have found that the additional understanding empowers residents to ask far more pertinent questions in advance of the work, giving the client even more opportunity to ensure the works are structured to maximise the benefit to the resident.

BVT's resident involvement in managing maintenance has become a cornerstone of our approach; No amendment to maintenance policy is implemented without consultation and agreement with our resident representatives.

In order to implement this strategy and achieve these objectives, careful and timely planning is essential. As all of our planned programmes operate on an annual basis, we firstly notify affected residents by post, three months in advance of the programme year. Utilising census data via our contact management system that is available to maintenance officers, from the very first notification of impending works, we are able to tailor our services to meet the specific needs of each household.

The first choice that is made is what format of information about the proposed works is most appropriate.

This is where the client maintenance function starts to become truly innovative. The information of what to expect and how to prepare for planned modernisation works can be found on a DVD that BVT has produced for this specific purpose. The DVD is comprehensive and covers every type of work that BVT carries out.

Specifically these are:

- Electrical Rewiring
- Bathroom Modernisation
- Kitchen Modernisation
- Central Heating system renewal
- Window replacement
- Roofing (Re-roofing or major repairs)
- External Decoration
- Internal Redecoration
- Gas Servicing

Split into chapters, residents are free to watch only the sections that are relevant to them, without having to sit through the whole thing if they are only on one programme. This gives the client the benefit of having a universal tool that covers all of the planned programmes, but doesn't waste our resident's time with erroneous information. The DVD is truly bespoke to BVT. Filmed entirely in our own properties while the works in question are actually being carried out, it features all of our own workmen and surveyors. The DVD provides a totally true representation of the reality what the works will entail.

Of course, not everyone has access to a DVD player, so for our residents that have indicated a preference for written information, we provide a comprehensive colour brochure. Using a transcript of the entire voice over from the DVD, coupled with carefully chosen screen shots from footage within the DVD, the brochure gives all of the same information, but in a more traditional style.

The benefit of residents having access to this level of detail about what is involved is huge to both resident and client. From experience, we have found that the additional understanding empowers residents to ask far more pertinent questions in advance of the work, giving the client even more opportunity to ensure the works are structured to maximise the benefit to the resident.

A good example of this can be seen on the rewiring section of the DVD. As part of the rewiring process, we give a choice of having new wiring either surface mounted or chased in.



For residents who are unaware of the distinction, watching footage of both methods significantly improves the resident's ability to make an informed decision that is right for them. Seeing the reality of works taking place can also be reassuring to residents who have a preconceived idea of how disruptive a process such as a kitchen modernisation can be. In reality, it may not be as bad as they feared – the DVD gives a “heads up” on this reality.

As part of this DVD, we are also able to show footage of our resident representatives in action, influencing the maintenance service that BVT provides.

Another major recommendation from our resident panel was that it would be beneficial for BVT to hold an annual maintenance exhibition. Therefore, accompanying each initial notification letter of major planned works, not only is there the DVD or brochure, but a vibrant invitation to our maintenance exhibition (branded “BVT Better Living”) encourages residents to attend. Our maintenance exhibition is another true innovation which, now it has been running for four years, has grown in notoriety and is now a key event in BVT's annual calendar.

At this exhibition, structured as an open day and held in a local community facility, residents are free to pop in at their leisure and see full sized samples of all of the components used across the planned programmes. The exhibition is a substantial event for us and includes exhibits such as:

- An entire, full sized fitted bathroom suite, including tiling, taps & flooring
 - 2 whole fitted kitchens, showing every available option
 - A whole single radiator central heating system, complete with “A” rated boiler, pipe work, controls and feature fireplace with surround
 - An actual window used in our replacement windows programme
- and much more!**

As well as seeing all of the components and choices available, residents also get the opportunity to meet the surveyors and workmen who will be carrying out the work. This gives a great opportunity to ensure that residents are fully informed, happy with the proposals and to start to build rapport with us, before we even carry out any pre-start surveys.

Everyone who attends the event is asked to complete a brief satisfaction survey, and as evidenced in the tables below, it seems to be appreciated!

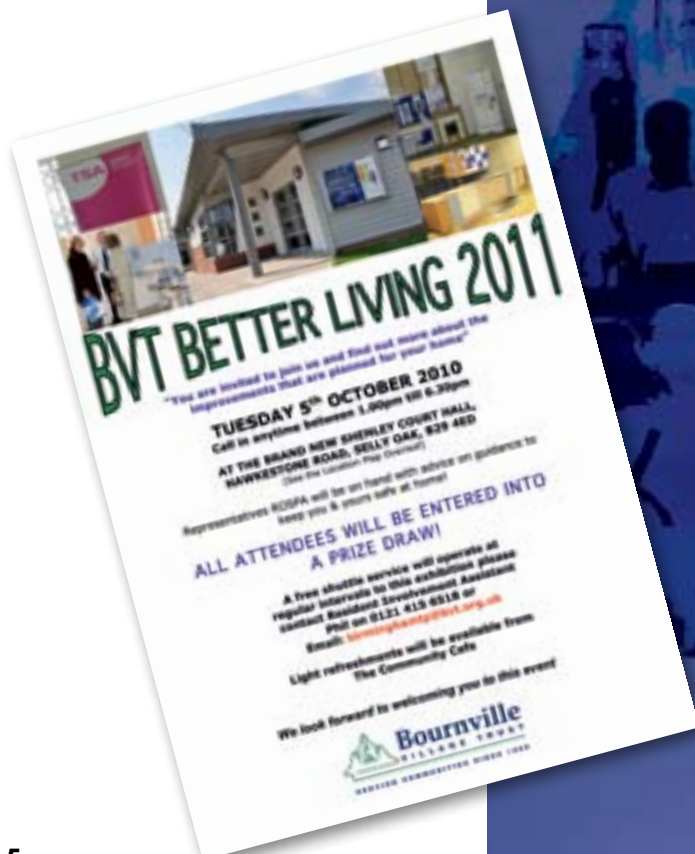
Q3. Did you find the exhibition helpful?

	Number	%
Yes	89	99%
No	0	-
Don't know No opinion	1	1%
Total	90	100%



Q6. How satisfied were you with the knowledge of staff at the exhibition?

	Number	%
Very satisfied	66	86%
Satisfied	11	14%
Dissatisfied	0	-
Very dissatisfied	0	-
Missing	13	-
Total	90	100%



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Such has been the success and subsequent growth of the event over the last four years that other agencies have taken the opportunity to attend to promote other related schemes. For example, Severn Trent have attended previously to promote water conservation measures, at our last event ROSPA were in attendance to promote health and safety in the home, and in January of 2010, even the TSA attended to publicise their new regulatory framework! (Prior to the election, of course!!)

Once our residents have had their chance to come to the exhibition, the next step is personal visit from one of our own surveyors who will be in charge of the work from start to finish. Having a single point of contact allows consistency from the resident's perspectives and ensures that whatever specific arrangements have been made they are always delivered.

This visit is effectively a consultation with the resident where detailed specifications are drawn up and any designs required are fully tailored to their needs and preferences. All options that are to be selected are made at this point, with any advice or support required to make the choice provided by our surveyor.

Also at this visit, our surveyors take the opportunity to introduce the requirement to carry out an asbestos pre-inspection. As asbestos can be quite an emotive issue for some residents, BVT prefers to take the time to discuss this with our residents in person, thus ensuring a rational understanding of the implications. Reinforced with a leaflet developed by ourselves, we ensure that asbestos is not a source of stress to our residents. At the same time we face up fully to our duty of care to our workforce & residents and ensure full regulatory compliance.

A major innovation in our asbestos strategy for 2010 has been the implementation of an online asbestos register. This register allows approved users to access all asbestos data held independently of BVT, empowering our contractors to be able to make their own enquiries and ensure duty of care for their own employees.

Over time, with the input of our panel of residents, the "toolkit" which our surveyors have at their disposal to provide a tailored service has grown. Recent examples of this include:

- Ensuring pre and post inspections on all major jobs, with special emphasis on snagging the job in partnership with the resident
- Building rapport and trust with residents by ensuring a single point of contact from beginning of the process to the end and beyond.
- Partnering with our community department to offer a comfortable daytime refuge at one of our community centres for vulnerable residents experiencing invasive works such as rewires.
- Providing support with how best to approach social services for the provision of adaptation works. Planned maintenance specifications can then be altered to suit the individual's specific medical needs. This can be as simple as allowing for grab rails to fitting entire bespoke bathing & kitchen solutions.
- Offering a full translation service and providing all information in audio format if preferred,
- Composing a suite of supporting leaflets and brochures in house so they are specific to our community and tailored to our community's needs.

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2 What are the benefits to the client, contractor, residents and the neighbourhood?



“ Trying to carry out works in a home while residents are in situ is always challenging, but with excellent provision of information removing fear of the unknown often results in a far more conducive environment for works to be completed. ”

As has been illustrated in detail in the previous section, the benefits for the resident are numerous, but there are also significant benefits for the client, contractor and wider neighbourhood.

Taking a dynamic, innovative approach for the client is not always easy and straight forward; There is always a temptation to take the view “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it!”, but BVT’s maintenance client function believes that taking this approach can only lead to stagnation and service standards falling over time – standing still can never be an option!

Specific benefits of our dynamic approach for the client & contractor can include:

- Increased levels of customer satisfaction, the acid test for the success of any client function, and assessment of contractor performance
- We have found that supporting residents that are due to experience major works from the start of the process, with both informative materials and a warm approach from staff, leads to more decisive customers when making decisions on available options. This saves a great deal of time when trying to provide a personal, bespoke service
- Trying to carry out works in a home while residents are in situ is always challenging, but with excellent provision of information removing fear of the unknown often results in a far more conducive environment for works to be completed.
- Regulatory compliance – short notice inspections have shown how regulators that rate associations as “excellent social landlords “ demonstrate that they are meeting the specific needs of their individual households and community
- Aside from any regulatory requirement to ensure that standards are always as high as possible, for BVT, the overriding benefit from an innovative client function is a moral one. It is clearly the right thing to do, to strive for the highest possible domestic standards of our housing stock and to ensure that it meets individual needs. Especially considering that our industry is charged with housing some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

A driving passion of the surveyors that make up the BVT client function is to ensure that technical specifications are as sustainable as possible and promote energy conservation without compromising the functionality for the end user. In addition to a rolling programme of insulation upgrades and renewal of inefficient boilers to “A” rated, our surveying team include a domestic energy assessor who offers energy improvement recommendations available to any members of our wider community, irrelevant of tenure.

Moreover, the BVT maintenance client recently completed a ground breaking retro fit of an inefficient, 80 year old urban property to include a wide range of products that claim to conserve energy. This was a high profile project intended to capture the imagination of wider neighbourhood and demonstrate what technologies people could replicate in their own home. In total we trialled over 100 separate green solutions ranging from major commitments such as the installation of a ground source heating system & sedum grass roofing areas, to smaller details such as led lighting and wildlife habitats in the garden.

The local schools were invited to be involved with project from the outset and suggest ideas of techniques for us to trial. The schools involved were invited to visit the site during works and use the property as a stimulus for project work. Once completed, the eco house was open to the public for several weeks to receive guided tours from our surveyors to discuss what ideas might work in other homes. We have since produced a DVD providing footage and a synopsis of the works and results of the monitoring of energy usage since the property was occupied. Evaluation of this project showed that it was exceptionally well received by the community and inspired many of our residents to embrace green initiatives they would have otherwise been unaware of.

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Ground Source Heat Pump hole drilled 65 metres into the ground.

3 What were the financial costs and benefits?



As the four surveyors delivering the planned upgrade programmes have gained experience and adapted their methods to increase efficiency, we have been able offer additional consultancy services to many other local charitable housing organisations, at below market rates.

The latest of these initiatives has just been completed for Sturge Housing. Spending £190,000 on decent homes works on their stock has generated an income for BVT of £11,000. This type of income that is achieved entirely with existing resources is always ring fenced to ensure that it is spent directly on the provision of services for our residents in the area of maintenance. This is how projects such as the interactive DVD and brochures are funded. It is with great pride how the BVT client function can improve services for it's residents purely by constantly, identifying efficiencies, and fully exploiting this potential, whilst also providing an excellent and cost effective service to smaller charitable organisations.

Other services that fall into this category also include offering energy performance certificates, also at significantly reduced rates compared to the market. These are offered not just to local charities, almshouses and our managed clients, but to owner occupiers wanting to benefit from the BVT's research & knowledge on how best to cost effectively improve thermal performance.



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Whether any of our techniques can be replicated by other organisations will depend on their ethos and overall approach to carrying out planned maintenance works. In our experience, social landlords that genuinely want to ensure that improvements are of maximum benefit to their people with minimal disruption could consider implementing some of the following:

- Consult as much as possible with your residents and bring them with you on your journey to decent homes and demolish the ivory towers! Rule by dictate will always meet resistance and your own residents will tell you what is right for them.
- Ensure households due to receive planned programmes are notified well in advance to allow for proper preparation. This allow for initiatives such as exhibitions and information DVD's to be fully utilised and the benefits maximised.
- As far as possible, always try to have a single individual who is responsible to allow for a relationship of trust to be established and that consistency of implementation of policy can be ensured.
- Prepare to be flexible – a recognition of the direct link between how standard of domestic environment directly impacts on quality of life. An intended improvement to a property is only so, if the resident perceives it as so.
- Ensure that residents are provided with high quality information that is real and informative. This will stimulate important questions that can be accommodated in advance of works, rather than half way through.
- Ensure that electronic systems are joined up to ensure that any data that a resident shared with an organisation is accessible and acted upon.

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



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