

## **Blackpool Coastal Housing**

### **Award Nomination:**

The Best DLO, providing the most innovative maintenance service.

### **Basis of the Nomination**

The following categories will form the basis of our nomination and subsequent submission.

### **Use of I.T**

#### *Use of Technology:*

Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) has recently implemented a remote working solution for our Property Service's In-house Maintenance Team.

The Connect system has been developed jointly with Telecetra and provides BCH with a tailor made business management solution.

The system handles all aspects of Property Services workflow management including:

- Appointing and Scheduling
- SOR codes and skill sets
- Job costing
- Stock control
- Location monitoring & lone worker protection
- Time sheets

The Connect system intelligently informs staff of where they need to be, when they need to be there and ensures they arrive with the right equipment. BCH's mobile solution means Technicians are never sent to fix something they don't know about. Effective fault diagnosis means they know exactly what parts to use.

This solution not only delivers a wholly integrated Responsive Repairs service but also effectively manages all our void properties.

Connect provides our Empty Homes Service with a modern Project Management approach to void control.

Connect also provides the functionality to have up to date information on Gas and Electrical repairs with real time information generated by ourselves or our Partnering contractors.

Connect's automated approach to job recording eliminates the need for timesheets, thus saving Technician time completing "old fashioned" paper sheets. This provides a more accurate approach to job costing, reducing delays in the approval of work and hence reduced administration and the associated cost.

Additionally, Connect gives us the ability to undertake Risk Assessments ensuring safe working practices are adhered to. Alerts are generated advising Technicians to check their work environment before commencing work, ensuring the safety of our staff. Asbestos alerts advise Technicians of where it's located.

The system also flags up regular Vehicle inspections ensuring we have an efficient and safe fleet, also downtime is reduced due to unnecessary repairs to the fleet.

Information on the diverse needs of our tenants is sent direct to the Technicians in-vehicle PDA ensuring the service BCH provides is tailored to meet the needs of our most vulnerable customer base.

To support this innovative approach to service delivery, BCH adopted a joined up approach and have introduced a GPS vehicle tracking system to work along side our remote working solution. BCH have worked closely with our supply chain partners West Coast Building Supplies and Procurement for Housing in providing an automated stores solution that sits along side.

Our all inclusive approach, capturing the Core business elements, means we now have the ability to get the correct Technician with the appropriate skills, to attend appointments with the customer, in the most efficient manner with the knowledge we have all the materials on our vehicles to ensure we complete a first time fix.

*How technology has improved our service?*

*Systems and Products Used:*

BCH has purchased the Connect for Social Housing Workforce Management solution supplied by Telecetra.

The base package has been further developed by BCH and Telecetra to ensure it meets our exact our Business needs.

We have also implemented GPS vehicle tracking systems supplied by Masternaut on all our fleet of vans.

These initiatives are supported by the Partnering arrangements we have in place for our stores provision, via the Procurement for Housing initiative. We have developed a one stop shop with West Coast Building Supplies which has resulted in BCH not needing to set up our own Depot. These arrangements have also eliminated the need for a myriad of smaller suppliers

*What systems/products we used*

The Connect working solution has been rolled out in two phases; the initial phase went live early in 2010 and related to our Responsive Repair service.

We have already seen efficiencies generated in how we appoint the work. This is now done by the nearest operative to the post code of the next job, we have also reduced the level of administration by the real time issuing of works to our Technicians.

In summary we anticipate a 30-40% efficiency savings to be generated meaning we can provide a more efficient and effective Repairs service for the customers of BCH.

To supplement the remote working solution we have developed impress van stocks. This means we have all the materials available for our Technicians to achieve a first time fix. Working closely with West Coast Building Supplies and BCH, Technicians we have van stocks that match the requirements of a mobile Responsive Maintenance Service

We have just embarked on the second phase which focuses on our empty homes service. Although it is a little early to have qualitative information, our anticipation is we will reduce the administration of the void process resulting in a quicker turn around time. If achieved BCH will be able to help people in housing needs get a home sooner than at present and to reduce the level of rental loss on empty homes.

The GPS vehicle tracking system which works alongside the Connect system has further enhanced our ability to make the best use of our resources while at the same time reassuring our workforce they have support while working alone addressing crucial Health and Safety issues

#### *Improving Service Levels:*

With the introduction of the remote working solution we can report that our high levels of performance have been maintained. The most significant change has resulted in a lower average job cost, reduced from £89 to £79, along with customer satisfaction which is currently above 96%. This is a fantastic outcome for tenants who are receiving an improved service at a reduced cost.

Another tangible outcome from our remote working solution has been our ability to reduce the volume of work going to sub contractors. We project this year alone we will save £360k. This has been achieved through efficiencies of the new remote working technology and redirecting our resources.

We have been able to generate a greater level and more qualitative Management Information since the introduction of the remote working solution. We are already using this to re-engineer our service provision with the longer term aim of providing a more planned approach to service delivery with the introduction of Property MOT's later in 2010. This is anticipated to drive even greater efficiency savings while improving our performance in all areas.

#### *Recouping Investment:*

It is anticipated to generate efficiency savings of between 20-25% in the way we deliver our service meaning payback will be just over 3 years.

BCH are not only able to demonstrate efficiency savings through reduced job costs, we now have the ability to provide a far more effective customer focused service. BCH currently undertake a greater volume of work far quicker than we have ever done before.

The GPS vehicle tracking solution has generated £11,000 savings in fuel costs within the first year and in the face of increased fuel costs. This success can be in part attributed to the outcomes from the SAFED driver training Technicians underwent. This enabled drivers to be reassessed on their driving ability and led to recommendations on driving more efficiently. This is not the end of the story; the reduced driving time has meant more time spent on productive work which we believe is in the region of 2,000 extra hours to undertake maintenance activities.

The supply chain arrangements with West Coast Building Supplies have resulted in a reduced level of material spend, however, the main saving has arisen from not having the need to have a fixed overhead in the provision of a Depot facility. The saving from this reduced overhead cost will be in the region of **£260k**.

#### *Staff Training:*

A comprehensive staff development programme has been produced by BCH. All staff using the remote working solution have received individual tailored training packages.

Workshops have been held and a support system put in place for those staff requiring a little more help to use the PDA's. For those staff who expressed a need for a greater level of help we provided mentoring arrangements with their colleagues to put them at ease during the implementation.

After the first phase we reviewed the training provision with staff involved in the implementation and received very positive feedback. The varied training initiatives have resulted in all staff fully using the new technology, even though some had reservations at the outset.

#### **Customer Participation**

Blackpool Coastal Housing is committed to working with our Customers to constantly improve the way we deliver our Repair and Maintenance service.

In 2010 we set up with our Customers the Repair and Maintenance Service Improvement Panel. This formalized the structure for Customer Involvement and put in place regular strategic meetings to review all areas of our operations. As well as monitor the existing services this group has the remit to explore and design service improvement initiatives.

To date this year we have:-

- Reviewing our Lettable standards for our Empty Homes re-servicing.
- Decided to rationalise our Repairs Priorities resulting in reducing the current five priorities to three.
- Consulted and agreed on a new recharge policy for the whole organisation.

- Designed and trailed, an annual Responsive Servicing programme for all BCH properties.
- Reviewed our current Service Standards and revised these to ensure that they met the aspirations of our Customers.
- Introduced a discount Voucher system with our supply chain partners for all BCH Customers.
- Consulted and designed the Homes Local Offer for the BCH Repair and Maintenance service.
- All the documents we produced have been reviewed by the Repairs Service Improvement Panel prior to the reprint.

In conjunction with our Customers we have designed our Repair and Maintenance service to meet their expectations. At the same time, ensured that we are both cost effective and the provider of the best possible customer focused services.

## Supply Chain



**Builders Supplies**  
West Coast Ltd

*Builders Supplies Managing Director, Peter Worthington (front left), Blackpool Coastal Housing Director of Property Services Cyril Holland (front right) and colleagues celebrate their new partnership.*

This year we have reviewed the stores function for the Operations Team. This was primarily due to the current PFH framework deal coming to an end.

We took this opportunity to radically alter the way we provide our stores function. We designed a service that cuts out downtime for our Tradestaff whilst at the same time ensured we did not need to set up a central Depot.

At the heart of this concept was 100% delivers to site ensuring that we generated reductions in our material costs.

This demanding brief resulted in only a few companies having the ability to deliver what we required, from the shortlist we enter into negotiations with Jewson's and West Coast Building Supplies (WCBS).

WCBS proposal offered to meet our requirements by providing a dedicated vehicle fully racked out with a delivery driver servicing only BCH work.

WCBS also offered to set up a sub depot in thier Fleetwood branch which would be solely for our use, storing all the items that we require to deliver our services.

They also offered to develop with our remote working software providers van stock replenishment, which will generate weekly delivers of top up impress van stocks ensuring that our Tradestaff have the right materials to complete repairs on the first visit.

As well as meeting all our requirements WCBS offered savings on the material budget of over 23% and a rebate of 1% of turnover paid back to us each quarter.

Embracing the Partnership approach we have entered into a four year agreement which will see year on year material cost savings of £120,000 and release £70,000 of latent capacity due to the reduction of wasted downtime of our Trade Staff visiting the stores.

### **Property Servicing**

With our Customers this year we have designed, trialed and tested a new approach to servicing our properties.

We have undertaken a great deal of benchmarking reviewing best practice in the sector.

Together we have jointly agreed a specification to annually service all BCH homes with the aim of reducing Responsive Repairs.

We have highlighted the most regular repairs we have historically undertaken and our schedule of works picks these items up either servicing or replacing them before they break.

This agreed approach will see our already high levels of Customer Satisfaction (in excess of 96%) improve even further as we provide this improvement to BCH Customer focused Responsive Maintenance service.

As well improving our current service provision we have costed out the impact of introducing this Responsive servicing regime and we anticipate generating in excess of £242,000 efficiency savings from the Responsive Maintenance budget in the second year after implementation.

The 'Property M.O.Ts' have received a 100% support from our Customers at a recent consultation event and will be incorporated into the Homes Local Offer which will be published April next year.

This service will be staffed from existing resources due to the efficiency savings generated from the Business reviews we have undertaken this year.

### **Value for Money**

Long before the Comprehensive Spending Review Blackpool Coastal Housing has made a commitment to ensuring that Value for Money is a key driving factor in all that we do, and Property Services has been at the forefront of delivering the corporate efficiency Agenda.

Large savings have been generated by re-engineering what we do by cutting out waste while at the same time improving the levels of our service delivery.

In the current year we have reviewed the following:-

- Pest Control Services – we have tendered this service generating in the region of £60,000 efficiency savings.
- Clearance and Cleaning Services – we have negotiated with a local provider to deliver the same services for 20% less than our current costs or a saving of £50,000 per annum.
- Roofing – We have reviewed the way we currently have provided this service and have decided to set up a dedicated Roofing team which will generate £80,000 worth of cost savings in the first year of implementation.
- Damp Proof Work – We have trained our Workforce and this work is now undertaken internally and not sub contracted out generating over £10,000 efficiency savings.
- Flooring – We have utilized our new supply chain arrangements to halve the cost of this service.
- Paint and Decorating – This service was previously been outsourced however with efficiency gains we now undertake this work direct generating in excess of £70,000 efficiency savings.
- The Out of Hours service provision has been reviewed and we have opted to totally change the way we currently deliver this service, the new way of working will generate £60,000 efficiency savings.

- We have re-engineered the way we deliver our Responsive Maintenance service cutting out waste which has resulted in reducing the sub contractor spend by £360,000 per annum.

The efficiency savings that have been generated from the review of our main supply Chain arrangements amounts to a 23% reduction in material costs (£120,000). The service delivers all store items to site resulting in a massive reduction in downtime, our estimations of the greater productivity should generate efficiency savings of £70,000 per annum.

We also can deliver all of our services without the need for a central depot which equates to a cost saving of £260,000 per annum.

We have designed with our Customers a Responsive Servicing regime for all BCH properties which will per annum generate efficiency savings of £242,000 from the Responsive Repair budget.

The total of cashable and none cashable cost savings is in the region of **£1,382,000.**

### **New Opportunities**

Due to the latent capacity within our workforce that has been realized this year we have been able to explore new opportunities.

The Operations Team have extended our services into the following areas:-

- We have undertaken Decent Homes refurbishment work.
- For Blackpool Council we have provided Care and Repair works.
- We have developed a Handyman service for all Customers of BCH.
- BCH has supplied a Repair and Maintenance service to Schools in the Blackpool area.
- For Sure Start Blackpool BCH has provided Repair and Maintenance services for vulnerable private sector tenants
- For Blackpool NHS we have delivered the Child Accident Provention Scheme undertaking works to ensure family homes are a safe place for children.
- The Springboard Family Intervention project in Blackpool is an integrated multi-agency team that works with families and BCH Operations Team has delivered services for this initiative.

### **Conclusion**

#### **1. What is innovative about our service?**



We have implemented the latest groundbreaking Remote Working technology. Our supply chain arrangements offer 100% deliveries to site making the most productive use of our Trade Staff time, we believe this partnership is the only one of it's kind in the country. We have worked with our Customers to design a service they want, and at the same time we have generated massive efficiency savings.

## **2. What benefits do we offer?**

We put our Customers at the heart of everything we do, our approach to Customer Involvement ensures that our Customers play a pivotal role in regulating and designing our service. With our Partners we look to share learning from the best practice in the sector constantly improving what we do. BCH is totally committed to the Blackpool community, we ensure that with our partners we source labour locally and work with the local community to improve the environment of Blackpool. Last year our community improvement activities totalled £4.3 million.

## **3. What financial benefits do we offer?**

The work we undertook last year on reviewing and redesigning our service to ensure that we were meeting our Value for Money targets has generated **£1,382,000** of efficiency saving which has resulted in our ability to expand our service and do more for less.

## **4. Could others benefit from our approach?**

The way we have designed our service can be adopted by any similar Organisation but the beauty of our approach is that anyone wishing to set up an In House operation can follow our format and instigate an efficient and effective Responsive Maintenance service delivery vehicle. Our approach to the supply chain arrangements is groundbreaking and delivers massive efficiency savings at the same time as providing a better service to our Customers.