



WANSBECK HOMES

Our Vision:

Making the Difference

Our Mission:

To deliver outstanding customer service and create a brilliant place to work.

Our Values:

- Customer Services
- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Quality
- Leadership

Most Innovative DLO

Background

In our previous inspections back in 2005 and 2006 especially 2005 there were major weaknesses in the approach to gas servicing with the Council failing to meet their statutory duties and responsibilities as a landlord. There was no clear ownership of this important service area or overall responsibility for the way the service was delivered and monitored. Too many people, service departments and IT systems were involved in the process. Records on completions were inaccurate and procedures were not robust.

However, in 2006 the last Audit inspection found more strengths than weaknesses. The percentage of appliances serviced within the last twelve months has improved to 98.76 per cent, unit costs are moderately low and customers can request appointments outside normal operating hours however, at a cost. The procedure is relatively clearer, certificates filed more efficiently but staff are not provided with details of the specific needs of their customers. The Council does not have independent checks carried out of the service, but satisfaction levels seemed to be on the rise.

Nevertheless since the last inspection the service has not developed in line with good practice but with the revolution of Wansbeck Homes we have made significant changes through action plans and development. The service provided to the customers of Wansbeck Homes is now providing a service to an **excellent** standard.

What is innovative about the service provided?

The gas servicing and maintenance provision is subject to strict regulatory and legislative controls, which can leave the organization at considerable risk.

Our gas and solid fuel maintenance service is vitally important to the health, safety and well-being of our customers and we are committed to delivering an excellent service.

We have brought together the client and contractor as one organization and this has enabled the organization to streamline operations and provide its overarching mission ***“To deliver outstanding Customer Service and create a brilliant place to work”***

A great deal of work took place in terms of reviews which led to service improvement plans that incorporated all good practice in line with the Audit commissions Key line of Enquiry (Kloe32).

Plans were devised and implemented following comprehensive reviews of the service provided – the following have been identified as **areas of improvement:**

- Current procedures have not been reviewed to reflect good practice and innovation
- There is no appointment system in operation for gas servicing
- Final stage letters are not sent by hand or by recorded delivery.
- Consequently we do not monitor responses to such approaches at a local level
- There are no plans in the procedure for earlier contact for subsequent safety checks when dealing with persistent no-access properties.
- Lack of systematic control on customers changing appointment dates – procedure does not factor this in
- There is no safety net built in to procedures for potentially vulnerable customers.
- No routine spot checks of CP12s undertaken against database
- All the areas where frontline housing staff could be involved in cases of persistent no access have not been identified.
- Missing opportunity to flag outstanding servicing with Care Services and capture any outstanding safety checks through out of office hour's emergency breakdowns.
- Centralised control stops when process hands over to estates team / legal services
- Legal process is taking too long and communication is not effective
- Have not assessed the effectiveness of the full range of legal remedies available injunctions, possession orders and EPA
- The revised gas servicing policy should be approved by the Board and its customers panels
- Contractors, quality assurance agents and customers are not involved in reviewing the effectiveness of our arrangements for servicing and the legal remedies available
- Internal and external quality assurance is not being carried out.
- Reporting arrangements need to be reviewed to ensuring there is effective monitoring and reporting in place on a regular basis
- Governance structures are not advised of the risk in relation to gas servicing or the progress and effectiveness of practices
- There is no analysis of risk in relation to gas servicing, i.e. length of period overdue, property type and previous non-compliance by the customer
- No performance information available on meeting gas appointments, which would be a measure of VFM and productivity
- There is no analysis of the levels of follow on work to define the level of work which could be completed at the servicing stage.
- The success of evening and weekend appointments has not been evaluated
- No health & safety risk assessment relating to asbestos in gas appliances
- There is no clear process that ensures quality checks are monitored, stored and acted upon
- No reporting in place for first time access

- Gas servicing contract is operated over a 12 month period, leaving no opportunity for mop up
- Programming needs to be profiled to eliminate build up in CP12 to carry out the majority of servicing in the Spring and Summer
- Implement an incentive scheme to address no access
- Publicise a programme of works for gas servicing on the website
- There is no campaign which promotes the importance of gas safety
- Customer satisfaction surveys are not regularly undertaking for gas safety
- No strategic approach to addressing the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Letters do not have community language and alternative format straplines
- Gas safety is not managed through the housing management system

Following the total review and areas of improvement needed to bring this service back from its knees, innovation was necessary to evolve the service provided.

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

The service review was the mechanism for improvements from the group's tenant's standpoint.

We introduced significant service improvement plans with achievable targets enabling Wansbeck Homes to implement quick wins and make the service provided robust and risk free.

All customers of Wansbeck Homes have now a comprehensive annual safety check carried out with the understanding that the organisation will strive to achieve 100% compliance with the Gas Safety Regulations ruling 36.

Part of the review highlighted a new innovative approach in terms of asbestos surveys to our annual servicing programme. Outstanding asbestos surveys will be linked to our gas servicing program to ensure access.

The following strengths are now in place and operating:

- Gas service programme was re-profiled over a 10 month period which now takes a more effective use of resources and an opportunity for mop up.
- Our gas/solid fuel safety policy will ensure that customers will be treated as individuals with fairness and respect meeting the needs of E&D.
- We have ensured that programming takes into consideration the likelihood of a proportion of properties not being accessed at first visit and ensure that there is sufficient lead-in time built into to minimise lapses in certification
- Built in routine review and checks of CP12 certificates by managers
- A new comprehensive gas solid fuel policy / procedure is in place inline with good practice and in consultation with customers

- Implemented a customer focused appointment system in consultation with customers
- Implemented reminders to customers for appointments via the engineers arriving
- Put into operation internal & external quality assurance for the gas solid fuel safety and modernization programme
- Put in place performance management to ensure we have developed robust monitoring and clear reporting arrangements
- Currently Implementing an incentive scheme to address no access in consultation with customers
- Put into action an effective promotion and campaign to advise customer of the importance of gas safety and the dangers of carbon monoxide.
- Put into place procedures to reflect good practice and innovation to ensure that we have robust and effective systems in place to gain access to all homes in a timely manner.
- Totally reviewed the legal remedies available and evaluated the options for seeking possession when no access occurs.
- Developed a strategic approach to addressing the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Robust procedures in place to gain access
- Engineers, who find that the customer has no credit to their gas or electric meters, will be given permission to add £5.00 credit to the meter for the annual service to take place.
- All procedures are followed and recorded
- Actions in the procedure taken within the prescribed timescales
- Progress on safety checks are carried out on a daily basis
- Specific clause in the Tenancy Agreement for access for gas safety
- Limiting devices are fitted where constant no access is a problem which comply with the Human Rights Act
- Progress on safety checks are monitored on a daily basis
- Internal quality controls are now in place
- All heating engineers are thoroughly checked for ACS qualifications.
- Cross checks are carried out upon completion of servicing
- Overdue gas services are flagged up on the IT system and call centre staff will try to book a service if the tenant rings in with a repair. If the tenant refuses, repairs will not be undertaken unless they are emergencies.
- Cross checks are carried out on all CP12 to ensure they are being completed correctly
- A comprehensive competency framework in place, which shows all relevant gas competencies for heating engineers.
- All engineers to have PDA mobile working
- Evening and weekend appointments are offered for gas servicing.
- Customers will be provided large print when required.
- CP12's are provided to all customers at the time of the safety check.
- Copy of CP12 is provided to all new and incoming customers.
- Safety checks are in place whenever a customer terminates their tenancy and when a tenancy commences their tenancy

- Productivity has vastly risen from 5 services a day to 8 services per day
- Dedicated servicing team
- Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are serviced at the same time as the appliances

We have implemented new letters, no access cards, posters and door stickers reflecting good practice and address the approach to no access to ensure that innovation is developed into the approach.

The new promotion of gas safety and the dangers of carbon monoxide has been recognised by customer panels which have highlighted the dangers of gas and solid fuel via hard hitting messages, posters, leaflets and flyers resulting in good advice.

What were the financial costs and cashable benefits?

Since stock transfer in 2008, the merge of the group and investment in vehicles and plant has lead to a reduction of costs to the gas solid fuel servicing section in 2008/2009.

Productivity has risen sharply from an average 5 services a day to 8 allowing efficiencies in the redeployment of resources. All engineers have their own designated gas vehicle with state of the art racking and plant.

The benefits of asbestos surveys can be quite sizeable in terms of the following:

1. Efficiencies are gained through one point of access for two work streams
2. The customer is not inconvenienced by more than one visit
3. Asbestos surveys benefit from our enforcement procedure for access
4. It demonstrates good partnership working
5. It is ground-breaking in its approach

Savings from efficiencies have put the Property Maintenance Division back on sound financial footing with the emphasis on training and attracting the right personnel.

The servicing programme runs now on a 10 month cycle with an opportunity for mop up resulting in savings.

A considerable amount of investment has been allocated on promoting the service through posters, advertising and hard hitting propaganda, resulting in less enforcements and unnecessary cold calling to enable access.

Mobile working has been introduced which will result in significant savings in terms of administrative procedure's, reducing the need for a paper based system.

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

Wansbeck Homes have recently undertaken a mock inspection by tribal consultants. The inspection report highlighted and recognised how the gas servicing has significantly improved and is now offering an excellent service.

We have visited various organisations to benchmark the service we are now providing. Without sounding over confident there has been a great deal of enquiries regarding the service we now provide, to the extent that a major organisation asked for us to forward documentation to benchmark their own procedures. That alone has shown how far we have come since stock transfer.

A lot of investment has gone into training the existing work force to empower the staff to make decisions to meet the needs of our customers.

We believe that the values the group inspires to, in terms of Customer service, teamwork, integrity, quality and leadership has been fundamental in the success we are now enjoying however, we endeavour to keep this momentum going in the ever changing in world of heating technology.

Hard hitting No Access cards – highlighting the dangers

Hard hitting - Warning sticker attached to door & appointment envelope

Hard hitting promotion campaign- Publicity posters