



**Soha Housing
Tenant Inspectors Report No 4
Planned Maintenance
November 2007**

Contents

	Page
Jargon Buster	2
Introduction	3
What we did and who was involved	4
Inspectors' findings	5
Desk top reviews	5
Staff interview	6
Computer based records	9
Interviews with tenants by telephone	11
Conclusions	12
Recommendations	14
Acknowledgements	15
Appendix (to be added)	16

Jargon Buster

SMART

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

1 Introduction

It was agreed the section to be inspected on this occasion should be within planned maintenance. It covers the following areas: the most recent windows and doors project, contract reference No. PLA 246, from its inception through the construction phase to its completion. We decided to use the Audit Commission KLOE 3 questions:

- How effectively did Soha communicate and consult about the windows and doors project?
- How easily do service users access the service?
- Did tenants know what to expect? What information did they receive? How clear was that information?
- Did tenants contact Soha at all during this process? How did Soha respond?
- How satisfied were tenants with the windows and doors project?
- How well did the project respond to different needs? Do people have fair and equal access to the service?
- Did the project help Soha to comply with the statutory requirements and good practice on stock investment and property maintenance?
- Was the project the right improvement work to the right homes at the right time?
- How well did the windows and doors achieve value for money?

2 What we did and who was involved

Members of the inspection team and the areas they covered.

Desk top review	Gerald Prior, James Barrett and Andy Dunsmore
Staff interviews	Gerald Prior and James Barrett
Computer based information	Don Harrison
Tenant interviews	Elvina Goddard and Janice Trevillion
Collation of information and reports	David Robinson
Report writer	Richard Hurst
Soha liaison	Catherine Little

3 Inspection findings

3.1 Desk top reviews

We reviewed information sent to tenants and a number of specific recommendations were made.

Stage 1 letter.

The third paragraph to be expanded to advise that tenants will be given the choice of style and colours of doors at contractors visits. Should staff letter be giving out direct phone numbers?

Stage 2 letters.

Acceptable with exception of phone number.

Customer promise booklet.

Requires updating to include Soha's standard section on other languages, larger print etc.

Page 3 second paragraph to be revised to include a second letter will be sent to advise exact date work will commence.

Page 4 third paragraph to be revised to state choice of style and colour is given. And a cat flap can be included if required.

Page 5 third paragraph revise questionnaire card to read customer satisfaction form.

An additional section needs to be added on health and safety, advising tenants of any risks that may occur due to the works.

Customer satisfaction forms.

Requires soha logo.

5-year improvement programme leaflets.

Need to add Soha's standard section on other languages

The dark coloured paper could make it difficult to read for tenants with poor eyesight.

3.2 Staff interview

An inspection of the current windows and doors contract being undertaken by Swan Windows (Contracts).

Interview with Michael Hughes, Surveyor

Pre-contract stage

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

The current policy relating to repairs and maintenance is due for review.

Contracting and tendering procedure.

The current procedure document is overdue for review and requires updating.

Time-span for replacements.

The time span for replacement is determined by a site survey of each property, as included in the five-year plan. And where appropriate only those items requiring replacement are included.

Life span of materials.

All materials are fully specified by Soha as complying with the British standards and other relevant standards.

However no checks are undertaken by Soha to ensure they meet these standards.

Five year plans.

The plans were submitted to the tenant forum and sub group for comment and approval before being issued.

Design.

Focus groups were held to obtain tenant views on forming a shortlist of doors and window styles, colours, handle types and positioning etc.

Tenants are currently offered a choice of doors in five styles and four colours.

Procurement stage.

Specification and contracts

The specification and contracts for the works, being based on the National Building Specification (NBS) and using the Joint Contracts Tribunal Minor Building Works Contract, conform to the acceptable standards of 'good practice' in the construction industry, but may be considered to be over specified. Each

tenancy is further surveyed and the works required to each property are scheduled in the specification and are individually priced.

Process for selection of tenderers.

Following an invitation to tender a short list was prepared; this included a mix of known contactors and new contractors. References were obtained only using Construction Line. No independent checks or financial check on prospective tenderers were carried out by Soha.

A total of four contractors selected to tender.

Analysis of tenders.

Three tenders were returned one declined to tender.

The quality of materials and the length of contract having been included in the specification, the contract was awarded to the lowest tender being swan windows at the sum of £568,671.51p

Programming of work.

Soha issued an early notice of intent to carry out the works in the form of a standard letter to all affected tenants.

This was followed by a second standard letter sent nearer the time of work commencing A customer promise leaflet was also enclosed. Contractors carried out a final survey to collect the measurements, and give tenants the opportunity to select style and colour and, if required, extras such as cat flaps etc. The contractor arranged the programmes for each property.

Health and safety.

Soha's health and safety assessments were issued to each tenderer as part of the tender documents. Before any works were allowed to commence, the contractor's health and safety file was inspected and approved by Soha's surveyor. There is currently no method to inform tenants of the health and safety implications involved in carrying out the works, or the contractors' responsibilities.

Supervision.

Site Meetings

Soha surveyors carry out site visits but there is no record for these visits. So neither the frequency or location, nor any details of the site instructions are recorded.

Contractors meetings.

Office based contractor meetings were held monthly or bi-monthly, these meetings were formally minuted.

Any variations in the contract are noted at these meeting and are subsequently confirmed on standard forms. The cost is previously priced in the tender document.

Completion.

Delays.

Provision for handling any issues of contract overrunning or not completed were included in the contract.

The retentions being 5% during the works, reducing to 2½% during the six months of defects period.

A bond to the value of 10% of the contract sum was included.

Defects.

On completion of each section of the works Soha's surveyor inspected all properties externally and a random sample internally, when access was arranged.

A schedule of defects was issued on a standard form. Tenants of each property were given a tenant satisfaction form to record their views, and draw attention to perceived defects.

Where necessary the surveyor arranged a visit and issued a defects notice were necessary.

A good percentage of tenants have returned forms. A final figure will be confirmed at the end of the contract and works are complete.

End of defects period.

No final inspection is made before release of retention monies.

Latent defects.

So far, surveyors' reports indicate no items that could be considered as latent defects

Tenant complaints.

A small number of formal complaints have been received. All being resolved through Soha's complaints system, at stage one, all being minor snagging items.

Conclusions.

The consultation and contract procedures were found to be well organised and complying with good practice standards.

Better recording of visits are needed.

Health and safety good practice should include tenants.

Policies and procedures need to be and are being revised.

3.3 Computer based records

We inspected the computer-based records held by Soha relating to Planned Maintenance with particular reference to the provision of new windows and doors.

The records held are extremely extensive and cover all aspects of each property owned by Soha. They are not specific to only one aspect of planned maintenance. The computer records also show the level of satisfaction shown by tenants regarding the upgrading of their property, which has taken place.

A full record of each property is held into which all the details of the property are fed. It is therefore possible to review the state of repair of each and every property.

This is used to obtain a report of the Decent Homes standard which is required to be met by 2009. At present 95.6% of all of the homes meet this standard, and it is possible from the records to ascertain which properties fail to meet the standard and in which particular aspect they are failing.

Whenever planned maintenance is to take place the tenant in question is informed and then noted on the database. At the completion of the works, a form is left with the tenant, which consists of a number of questions regarding the nature of the works and whether the tenant is completely satisfied with the work that has been carried out.

At present only about 17% of these forms are returned, but from those that have been received a "Customer Satisfaction" chart is produced. This is maintained in columnar fashion, one of which is Doors and Windows. At present this is showing a 98% return of satisfaction for the job done.

Whilst this is satisfactory as far as it goes, there is a problem where some dis-satisfaction of the work done is expressed. The present system is that the comments are passed on the contractor, who is expected to rectify them. This probably happens, since in most cases the contractor is still on site and can remedy the problem swiftly. However, at present Soha do not take up the matter directly with the tenant, and there is, therefore, no means of Soha knowing whether the tenant is happy with the results of the remedial works.

It would be relatively simple for a procedure to be put in place for follow-ups of complaints to be made. This would have two good outcomes. Firstly, it would enable Soha to keep a close watch on possible faults of the contractor, and secondly, it would enhance customer satisfaction.

3.4 Interviews with tenants by telephone

Notification to tenants

Notification to tenants was found to be satisfactory. Tenants were contacted by Soha and/or the contractors.

Work carried out.

The tenants interviewed were extremely satisfied with the overall work, the way it was carried out, the notification and the efficiency. Work was completed on time. Timekeeping was found to be excellent. Contractors were found to be polite, courteous and very tidy.

Tenants didn't need to contact Soha during work or after completion. Tenants didn't feel the need for extra information. They were already well informed by letter or telephone.

Conclusions

After our conversations with the tenants, our conclusions are that overall the tenants were very grateful for the standard of quality of materials and the work carried out.

4 Conclusions

Using the information from the desk top review, staff interviews, looking at computer records and tenant interviews, we returned to our original questions.

- **How effectively did Soha communicate and consult about the windows and doors project?**
- **How easily do service users access the service?**
- **Did tenants know what to expect? What information did they receive? How clear was that information?**

Some information is currently under review. We have made specific suggestions for improving the information. Although tenants interviewed were satisfied with the two letters, we felt they could be improved. For example:

- Making it clear in the first letter that the time period does not mean tenants have to put their lives on hold for months
 - Informing tenants about health and safety implications caused by the works.
 - Sending out the customer promise booklets earlier (with letter 1)
 - We also wonder if consultation for windows and doors is the same for sheltered tenants, who were not part of this project.
-
- **Did tenants contact Soha at all during this process? How did Soha respond?**
 - **How satisfied were tenants with the windows and doors project?**

The tenants we interviewed were happy with the work, so didn't contact Soha. However, we found uncertainty about how Soha responds to negative comments on forms. We feel that Soha should contact tenants directly where a problem is reported. We also think there should be a final check of defects put right before the retention money is released.

Records show there have been no formal complaints about this project.

Customer satisfaction is high on this project. However, there is no way of knowing how satisfied people are who don't return the forms. Soha could phone some of these people to check satisfaction.

- **How well did the project respond to different needs? Do people have fair and equal access to the service?**

Soha is currently carrying out a data capture to find out more information about its tenants. Once this is complete, they will need to check the satisfaction of different groups of people and also see if any groups are not returning the satisfaction form.

There is no translation or different format offer on the customer promise booklet or 5-year plan.

- **Did the project help Soha to comply with the statutory requirements and good practice on stock investment and property maintenance?**
- **Was the project the right improvement work to the right homes at the right time?**

Overall, the evidence suggests yes to both questions.

- **How well did the windows and doors achieve value for money?**

Given the low price and the high customer satisfaction, yes it did achieve value for money.

We felt it was important that responsive repairs feed back to planned maintenance if there are any ongoing problems with components.

Other

There is no paper trail to show site supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One.

Implement a procedure which would simply mean a few calls to be made by planned maintenance operatives to tenants who are not satisfied. This would not be a too onerous task, since the levels of complaints are very low, but it would significantly increase tenant satisfaction.

Two.

Better and clearer information to tenants on five-year plan about the fact that the plan may change and how it is determined.

Three.

Carry out additional check on manufacturers' products

Four.

Avoid over specification of the works.

Five.

Independent checks on potential contractors, involving tenants in the selection process

Six.

Revise standard letters to customers and customer promise booklet.

Seven.

Review health and safety to include tenants.

Eight.

Devise a system to record site visits.

Nine.

Carry out final inspection of work on defects before release of retention monies.

Ten.

Complete review of all relevant policies and procedures.

Acknowledgements.

The inspection team would like to thank all the planned maintenance team that took part in this inspection and the tenants that took the time to give interviews and input into this inspection.

Items recommended for inclusion in the appendix.

A typical copy of 5-year plan.
Copy of stage one letter.
Copy of stage 2 letter.
Customer promise booklet.
Customer satisfaction form
Kloe 3