



Working together to break new ground in Repairs & Maintenance

Information on CIH's collaborative, sector leading approach to delivering customer excellence and genuine asset value in repairs

Challenge • Interaction • Innovation • Solutions

Ten of the country's housing providers have joined forces with CIH in a forward thinking project designed to address the key strategic challenges faced by social housing landlords today in delivering repairs and maintenance services. The project will generate real insight into what it takes to create a repairs service that really hits the mark through an open and collaborative approach to evaluation and learning. The aim is to work together, sharing practice and innovations, to find the solutions that can be promoted to the sector as the 'next' best practice.

The Challenge

Each year social landlords spend a third of more of their total income on repairing and maintaining the housing stock. The financial climate means that obtaining demonstrable value from this commitment must be a corporate priority. Furthermore, there is an enduring correlation between tenant satisfaction with repairs services and overall landlord satisfaction. Yet the work of repairs teams and the contribution they make to the organisation is often overlooked and undervalued.

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is a project that will challenge current thinking, broaden horizons and help the participants be better equipped to 'make the case' for maintenance in their organisation.



Running for 12 months until August 2014, we will be responding to the intense interest in understanding and capturing the elusive formula for generating a successful, effective and efficient repairs service experience. Taking some of the principal building blocks of proficiency in repairs, CIH will be leading participants in examining the very best approaches, lessons and learning to help housing providers be an effective, discerning and inclusive client, providing ever improving value and service excellence.

Project Themes

- **Becoming an intelligent client** with enhanced control over the repairs process, acquiring accurate information on true costs and repairs performance; integrating repairs and maintenance activities with wider asset management programmes so they become complementary; training and appointing high calibre professional staff in a well-led and empowered client team; designing the service around the customer and constantly seeking out better value.
- **Working with tenants and residents** to determine the priorities for repair and service standards: shorter completion targets; faster appointments; insight into individual needs; energy conservation; designing the service around the customer to provide expanded tenant choice over things like appointments and fittings and keeping customers fully informed about the progress of their repair.
- **Establishing the right business process** and a complementary ICT system that supports total visibility of all repairs for managers and customers, allowing an unfettered end to end flow of repairs in line with service standards; identifying and understanding the customer journey and engaging staff and partners in shaping the business process; application of systems thinking to leverage improved value and lower transaction costs.
- Evaluation of competing business model options designed to reduce costs and optimise value delivered: application of individual job pricing through the **schedule of rates or overall price per property**; the competing merits and relative efficiencies of traditional contracting, direct employment, joint venture or managed service.
- Investment in **technical innovation** that can deliver added value, tenant safety and sustainability: using people and property profile information to plan for successful outcomes at the first visit.
- Selecting and **appointing the right contractor** to deliver improved service standards and drive down repairs costs; reducing the high costs of contract procurement through standardisation and a shared approach; or developing the in-house DLO with strong links to residents and promoting an effective customer service and performance improvement culture which brings a wider community impact.
- **Critical evaluation of partnering**: Has the Partnering ethos created lazy clients and weakened capacity to lead and drive service improvement? Is there a genuine incentive for contractors to secure client loyalty given the lack of flexibility and room for manoeuvre clients have in procurement? Do industry claims to have engineered better through Partnering hold water? What does smart client-led partnering look like?
- **Performance Monitoring**: benchmarking distinctions between performance quartiles are so narrow that the difference can sometimes have no discernible impact upon the tenant experience. So what's the potential for developing a new approach to performance measurement and monitoring, setting performance improvement targets and establishing peer to peer comparisons? Shouldn't the data recorded reflect our collective learning about what customers really value about public services and what aspects they often report as needing improvement?
- Promoting individual **tenant responsibility** for maintaining their home in good repair and collective responsibility for participating in decisions on how best to commit resources.
- An **integrated approach to planned maintenance** that combines responsive repairs with extending component lifecycle and timely renewal when they are about to fail.
- Elevating the status of repairs and maintenance as an **exciting and dynamic career choice**, attracting young people with potential to a recognised part of the professional housing discipline.

Ultimately, the project will subject these and other initiatives to critical appraisal in order to test and measure the outcomes realised and to draw out the lessons for the sector for repairs service design and planning.

Who are the participants?



How do I find out more about CIH's sector leading support to improve repairs services?

For further information about the Working together... project or about CIH's range of uniquely informed, practical support for housing providers contact Richard Medley, Director, CIH consultancy at richard.medley@cih.org or on 07799 115571.