

# Repairs and Maintenance Service Storyboard



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## Introduction

*The Audit Commission's Inspection of the Repairs and Maintenance Service in May 2002 resulted in a rating of poor service (no star), with promising prospects for improvement.*

*The Council recognised the need for fundamental change to improve the Repairs and Maintenance Service. It brought in a new management team to lead the process of changing the culture and improving performance of services. A clear framework is in place for managing change, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.*

*The Inspection commented on the Service and recommended improvements. This storyboard demonstrates how their recommendations and comments have been taken on board by the Service and acted upon to improve the Service.*

*This is one of a suite of three documents including the Repairs and Maintenance Service Improvement Plan and the Repairs and Maintenance Position Statement.*

*The Storyboard shows the massive change programme undertaken from September 2002 to December 2003, resulting in improved performance and improved customer satisfaction. This has instilled confidence in staff throughout the Service.*

*Despite progress made, the report outlines areas requiring further improvement, detailing innovation and good practice procedures to be implemented to achieve this. The improvements have been proposed following consultation with our tenants and staff, and benchmarking excellent repairs and maintenance providers.*

*We have employed consultants to challenge potential weaknesses and to recommend changes. The Housing Quality Network carried out a mock inspection of the Service in November 2003 and identified areas that require urgent action to ensure a successful re-inspection.*

*These planned improvements should enable the Repairs and Maintenance Service to achieve at least two stars when the Audit Commission Inspectors revisit in February 2004. They are the foundation on which the Housing Service can become a three-star (excellent) service by April 2005.*

**I Produce information for tenants about the Repairs Service and individual repair requests**

We asked our customers about the information they want and how they want the information to be provided. To involve a wide cross-section of customers, we used extensive and innovative consultation methods.

This involved:

- Consultation with the Repairs and Maintenance Policy Panel
- Reviewed responses from telephone and postal customer satisfaction surveys to extract suggestions made by customers
- Attendance at Area Housing Panel meetings
- Tenant involvement in the Management of Change Group meetings
- Seeking advice from the Tenant Involvement Unit
- Discussions with front-line area housing office staff
- Discussions with Rotherham Connect Contact Centre to establish the most frequently asked questions and issues raised by customers
- Introducing face-to-face customer satisfaction consultation in the "Going Local" neighbourhood management pilot

To learn from others we sought best practice from a number of sources including other Councils, Housing Associations, the Audit Commission, CRE, HouseMark and the Housing Quality Network.

We display repairs related DETR publications in all area housing offices and have produced the following information focusing on service accessibility :



- Information leaflets about repairs and maintenance, Decent Homes Programme, management of asbestos and home improvements

- "Welcome Home!" Handbook - a comprehensive guide giving tenants information and advice on housing issues including:

- How to report a repair
- How to report an emergency repair out of office hours
- Repairs diagnostic diagrams
- Clear identification of repair responsibilities
- Service standards including response times
- Information about gas appliance servicing
- An explanation of programmed works
- Information relating to our Asbestos Policy and Procedures
- Information about the Right to Repair
- An explanation of what to do before home improvements
- Useful addresses and telephone numbers of other organisations and services
- Posters and cards in area housing offices and public buildings to promote the Rotherham Connect service
- Open House Newsletter - providing customers with essential information about the Service



The Communications and Information Group awarded the publications the 'Easy Read' symbol. The Group includes tenant representatives, who check that the information is clear and easy to understand, and that plain language is used.

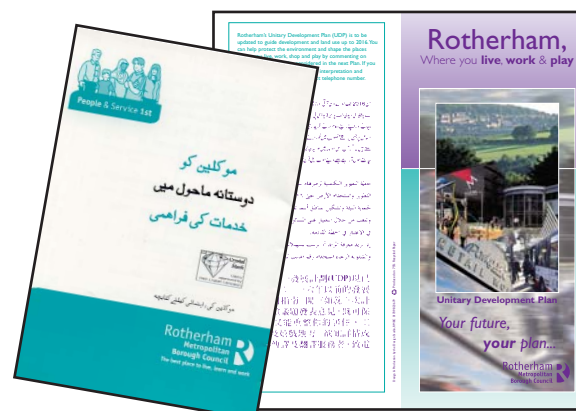
The Council has successfully negotiated a 12-year strategic partnership with BT and has formed RBT (Connect) Limited as a Joint Venture Company. The Council are involving customers in the development of the Service. This Partnership is transforming customer contact through its contact centre, the development of a series of one-stop-shops and other customer access channels. The

Rotherham Connect contact centre provides an excellent 'one-stop-shop' approach to customer enquiries.

We have focused on providing a 'people-centred' service where tenants can speak to staff direct who are able to help diagnose the problems and agree a response that satisfies the tenant's needs and our performance standards.

Major changes have improved access and information to customers as follows:

- Use of local language facilities for interpretation and translation services. This has been invaluable in providing documents that meet the needs of minority groups.
- Staff can access 'Language Line' which provides an immediate translation service.
- Hearing loops have been installed to assist customers with hearing difficulties.
- Introduction of a minicom system.
- Customers have the facility to report their repairs over the Intranet.
- Appointments are offered in all trades for internal repairs.
- A receipt system has been introduced for all repair requests. Once a repair request is received, a receipt is posted to the tenant confirming the appointment time and giving a reference number. If the repair request is classed as non-urgent and becomes a programmed repair, a letter is sent to explain that the repair will be completed as part of a larger programme of works and when a date will be confirmed.



The diagnosis of repairs has been vastly improved through the following:

- Introduction of a diagnostic repairs manual for Rotherham Connect and front-line staff with clear illustrations of fixtures/features etc and, a process of questioning to correctly identify the problem.
- Training and regular updates to all front-line staff in diagnosing faults.
- Permanent technical staff sited in Rotherham Connect to provide ongoing mentoring and support to customer advisors and to deal with more difficult repair issues.



Since January 2002, appointments are offered for all internal repairs, allowing customers to specify times that are convenient for repairs to be carried out. Customers choose from three specific periods during the working day, Monday to Friday. Our performance in this area has significantly increased to 63.86% of appointments being made and kept. There are plans to increase this and we are currently in the early stages of developing evening and weekend appointment slots to increase accessibility to the service further.



Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council  
Housing Services  
Responsive Repairs Section

Job No: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Housing Services called today \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ as per the appointment made with you. No one was at home.

The job has now been cancelled and the information has been passed to Housing Services.

If you still require the work to be carried out you should contact Rotherham Connect (01709) 336009 to re-report the job and arrange a further appointment.

**2 Develop customer feedback on the Service and ensure this is used to effectively monitor and improve the Service**

We have a comprehensive system for collecting, analysing, reporting and acting upon customer feedback.

The Community Empowerment Strategy demonstrates our commitment to reshape services around the needs of neighbourhoods and communities rather than estates. It aims to improve the current structure of customer involvement and create opportunities for our customers to influence policy and service delivery.

A Tenant Steering Group (Council Housing Futures Group), made up of representatives from TARAs, lead the single most important housing management issue to be addressed by the Council – choosing the most appropriate stock option to meet the Decent Homes Standard.



In support of our commitment to receive and act upon customer feedback at the highest level, the Executive Director and Head of Housing Services have a regular programme of attendance at the Tenants' Forum.

The Tenant Involvement Unit (TIU) plays a vital role in receiving customer feedback. TIU encourage tenant feedback by its support of TARAs, liaison with the Area Housing Panels, Open Days, Management of Change Group meetings, presentations and via the feedback sheets included in the widely distributed Open House Newsletter.

As 'Customer Champion', the TIU leads the tenant consultation process and ensures all tenants have the opportunity to input into future plans and service delivery.



Dedicated customer forums exist to continually review major areas of work. For example, within the Decent Homes Partnership, a permanent Customer Focus Group exists to review contractor performance and provide feedback on customer satisfaction, in addition to tenant membership of the Decent Homes Board.

We have been proactive by bringing Repairs and Maintenance Service staff to housing areas and organising events that encourage honest and constructive feedback. Recent examples have included several roadshow programmes in libraries, community centres, shopping areas and the highly successful Rotherham Show held annually in September.

Complaints and Councillor Surgeries are monitored monthly and are actively used to identify where improvements are needed. Information is also gathered on what work and a bank of compliments is maintained which helps motivate

and recognise staff, as well inform managers of good practice.

Our commitment to receiving and acting upon customer feedback is linked to our Performance Management Framework. There is a clear regime of pre-determined survey frequencies, sample sizes and reporting dates.

Customer feedback is a key indicator within our Performance Management Framework.

Information is now reported in a disciplined and visible manner in the following ways:

- Each quarter survey information is reported to Management Team. Key trends and issues for action are highlighted in advance following analysis by the Performance & Quality Unit. Customer feedback is passed on to all the workforce during staff briefings and issues are highlighted for remedial action.
- Customer feedback is passed on to all operatives during weekly staff briefings and

Methods for receiving feedback include:

Group	Method	Frequency
Tenants who have reported a repair	Telephone	Monthly (200 tenants contacted via Rotherham Connect)
	Postal survey	10% of all completed repairs
	Foreman quality inspection	Need to check
	Operative post-repair tenant questionnaire	Currently being piloted
Gas Servicing	Pre-paid postcard	100% of all gas servicing and to be extended to other areas
Tenants who have received improvements via the Decent Homes Programme	Quality inspection as soon as works completed.	10% of all completed repairs
	Postal survey 6 months after works completed to test whether refurbishment is fit for purpose/tenant satisfied.	
Re-letting of void properties	Quality inspection as soon as works completed	100% of all void dwellings
All tenants	Community roadshows and Rotherham Show to present early priorities for Annual Maintenance Plan and receive feedback on general service issues	

issues are highlighted for remedial action. Reflecting the importance of customer feedback, The Executive Director and Head of Housing discuss customer service issues during the programme of weekly site visits/ team meetings.

- Customer satisfaction results are reported to the Policy Panels and Cabinet, along with any management actions already agreed.
- Poor responses to satisfaction surveys are followed up immediately and discussed with the individual to establish the reasons behind their dissatisfaction and use the information to ensure that the problem is not repeated.
- A programme of area-based roadshows are held to consult on future maintenance plans, service developments, priorities etc. To encourage maximum interaction with tenants, these roadshows are held in public locations.
- Performance information has been shared with

tenants at meetings of TARAs, Area Housing Panels, Policy Panels and the Tenant Steering Group (Council Housing Futures Group) and included in the Open House newsletter.

- Monthly performance updates are also on display at all of our service outlets
- Customer involvement in target setting and monitoring the quality of services has led to a review of standards and the introduction of local performance indicators. These local performance indicators are included in a suite of information reported quarterly to Elected Members on a Borough-wide basis through the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Customers are actively involved in monitoring our performance. The development of a 'Customer Inspection Service' in January 2003 identifies service improvements via our customers routinely carrying out exercises, which test how well we are performing. These include telephone mystery



■ Empty property checks.

Results of the exercises are reported monthly. These reports are sent to the customers that take part in the exercises and reported to Programme Area Management Team (PAMT). PAMT consider the results and take action to remedy poor results with relevant managers.

Programme Area staff can access reports on the

Intranet. Quarterly reports are produced, summarising the quarter's results and explaining what future exercises are planned. This report is sent to all Tenant Representatives and placed on the Intranet for all staff to access.

This open and honest approach has been fundamental in producing a customer-focussed culture change within the Service.

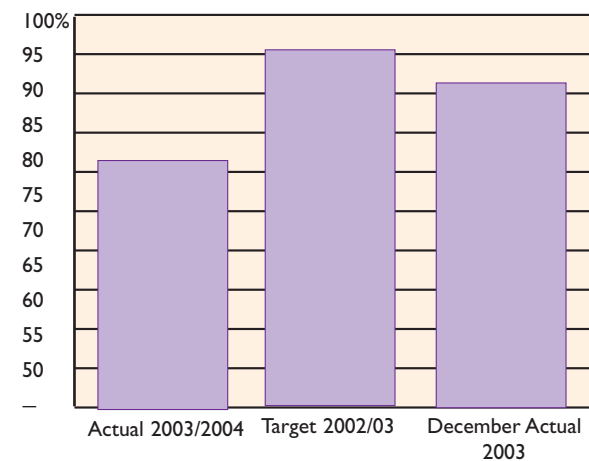
**4 Complete repairs within the priority times.**

We have made extremely good progress since the inspection. The system for recording repairs has been reviewed to ensure it is robust and provides accurate information. The introduction of a 'Rapid Job Entry' system in September 2002 ensures that the customer's repair request is recorded and processed at the time of receipt. The customer is immediately given a job number for their future reference. The introduction of a dedicated repairs team within Rotherham Connect has improved how we handle repairs and provided a one-stop shop approach to repairs handling.

Performance continues to improve against targets.

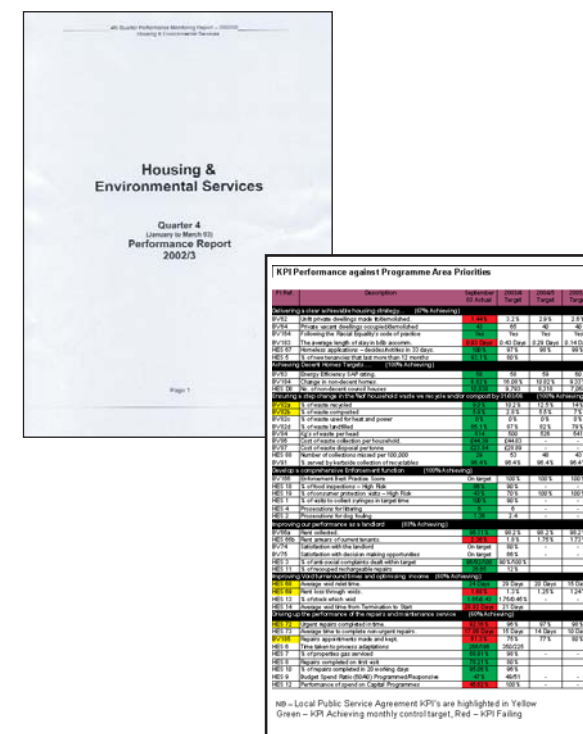
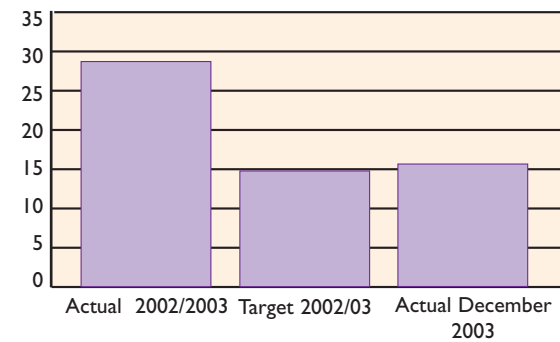
■ **HES 72: Urgent Repairs Completed within Time Limits**

Target 2003/04: 96%  
Actual: December 03: 92.23%

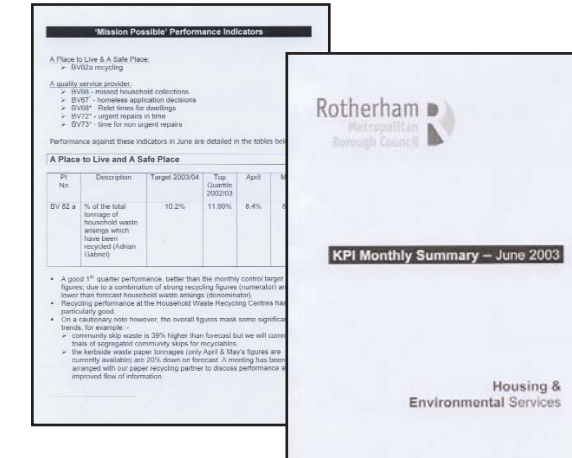


■ **HES 73: Average Time Taken to Complete Non-Urgent Repairs**

Target 2003/04: 15 days  
Actual December 03: 15.7 days



The Inspection identified that there was a lack of performance management throughout the Programme Area. This was addressed by developing a framework that would quickly turn this around.



Following discussions with the Interim Management Team in July and August 2002, a framework was designed to raise the profile of analysing, monitoring and reporting on the programme area performance indicators, this included:

- Appointing PI managers and deputies to increase accountability and ownership.
- Establishing a uniform Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report for the whole Programme Area.
- Developing reporting mechanisms to Members, management, staff and customers.

The Performance & Quality Unit assessed all 40 KPIs to test their accuracy against definition. This resulted from comments by the District Auditor following the audit of the Best Value Performance Plan. This identified a number of areas that needed to be strengthened to satisfy external scrutiny. The assessment procedure was held up as 'good practice' and adopted by the rest of the Council in October 2003. As a result of the assessment, PI managers developed action plans to deliver their year-end targets.

Our new approach to performance monitoring, contained within the Rotherham Performance Management Framework, is based on a high level of 'visibility'.

KPIs, including the above indicators, are reviewed as follows:

- Weekly management team meetings
- Monthly Programme Area Management Team meetings
- Weekly Service Improvement Project reviews (separate from operational management and tasked with delivering a step-change in performance)
- Monthly Cabinet Report
- Quarterly reporting to Scrutiny Panel
- Monthly Performance Clinic focusing on Mission Possible KPIs
- Monthly reporting to our customers

As the reporting procedures developed it became clear that the Programme Area needed to keep a closer and regular eye on all of its KPIs. By December 2002, the Programme Area was monitoring and reporting on all KPIs on a monthly basis. Reporting included comparison against other Councils, past performance comparison, identifying KPIs which are not on target and performance league tables of KPIs and KPI managers. This information highlighted the poor performing areas and resulted in the development of the 'Performance Clinic'.

The Programme Area Management Team created the 'Performance Clinic' so they could challenge the performance of individual KPIs with the PI managers, identifying the reasons why KPI are not on target, what action is needed to turn it around and monitoring the action plan. Again, this was held up as 'good practice' and shared with the rest of the Council. This was in place from January 2003, and was a key driver for increasing the number of KPIs on target from 36% in December to achieving 50% by the year-end (March).

During February and March 2003, managers, staff and customers told us which KPIs they would like us to report against for 2003/04. 16 new indicators were developed, replacing many old, non-comparable KPIs, to form our new KPI suite for 2003/04. Our new suite compliments the new 'Programme Area Performance Plan' and the Service Business Plans which identify how we will tackle the Programme Area's Seven Key Priorities for 2003-2006.

Staff and management were consulted about all

targets set for 2003/04, aiming to achieve top quartile performance and continuous improvement.

In the first quarter of 2003/04, further developments have improved the monitoring and reporting of performance information. These include:

- Traffic lighting system to identify good, fair and poor performance
- Revised and improved action plans focusing on key improvements needed to achieve year-end targets
- Monthly control targets that more accurately show which areas are on target or failing
- Strengthen 'Performance Clinic', to produce revised action plans that turn performance around.

This early activity has resulted in 80% of KPIs being on-target to achieve the year-end target and shows the level of improvement since December 2002.

### 5 Minimise repair jobs not completed on the first visit

We are committed to providing a 'right first time' service ensuring repairs are made quickly, correctly and with the minimum of disruption to our customers.

We have implemented several changes:

- Front line staff have received training in recording repair requests and questioning techniques needed to obtain the information required.
- A dedicated Repairs Team has been created within Rotherham Connect to concentrate front-line expertise on repair issues and progressively improve the diagnosis of repairs and subsequent response.
- Rotherham Connect have the same comprehensive training and have Housing Technical Officers permanently alongside to provide support and regular training updates. They ensure that experts are on hand to correctly interpret a repair request, assign the correct priority and task the right resources.
- A new Repairs Diagnostic Manual has been created with visual images of house construction of typical repairs, with easy to follow questions to help correctly identify the problems.

Other performance management framework systems have been put in place. These include:

- Service Business Plan Monitoring and Reporting.
- Customer Inspection Service – customers of the Council testing and monitoring the services we provide.
- Benchmarking

Action is being taken to ensure that when repair requests are received, we check that they are our responsibility and award the correct urgency classification.

The 'Right to Repair' Act classifications have been reasserted to ensure the correct deployment of operatives and to avoid the unnecessary deployment of operatives to urgent jobs (ie, less than 7 days) which could be batched and programmed.

- If technical information is needed, an inspection is arranged to assess the repair to ensure the correct response.



- Information obtained from the repair request will identify likely material requirements. This can be checked against stock or, if necessary the parts can be ordered to arrive before the repair appointment date to avoid any unnecessary delay

- Data on historic usage of spare parts and discussions with operatives have been used to create imprest van stocks, reducing the number of repeat visits due to out of stock items.

- Multi-skilling is a key feature of our one-stop-shop service. A target of 10% of operatives with multi-skills was agreed for the neighbourhood management pilot. At September 2003, 23% of operatives are multi-skilled. This success is being extended to the wider Service and being targeted at trades in greatest need eg, plastering .



We monitor the effectiveness of measures through a local performance indicator, currently 78.5% of repairs are completed on the first visit.

Hand-held technology will be trialled in 2004, while mobile phones are provided to all operatives to assist rapid communications.

New technology will allow operatives to be allocated work in a more service centred way than at present.

The current paper based Repairs Diagnostic Manual is being reviewed to replicate it electronically, adding it the Rotherham Connect systems with a built in questioning function to guide the call handler and resulting in accurate

repair diagnosis.

The tenant handbook entitled 'Welcome Home!' was published in December 2003 following benchmarking with other housing organisations and consultation with our major stakeholders. The document covers all housing issues and contains diagrams to assist customers to accurately diagnose their repair needs and help us to get it 'right first time'.



### 6 Examine the bonus system

The requirement to introduce a payment scheme that improves productivity and customer service has been prioritised. The current bonus scheme is to be replaced by a salary system, bringing operatives into line with other staff.

A team involving trade union, Human Resources, Service management and SIP project team members has developed this with a new incentive scheme based on multi skilling.

The trade unions and management have a shared ambition to improve the service provided and have approached the issue of bonus as partners.

To assist in the development of a new scheme, we have examined schemes operated by other Local Authorities (eg, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Sunderland, Knowsley MBC) and received advice from the national office of our trade union on best practice.

### 7 Introduce robust systems to quality control the repairs service

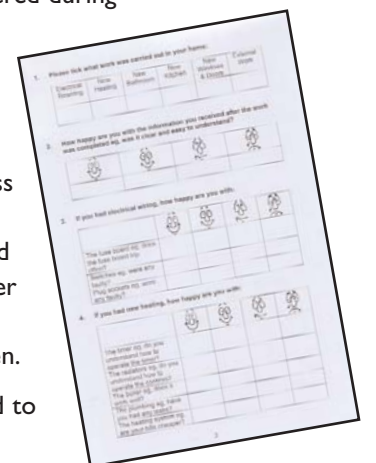
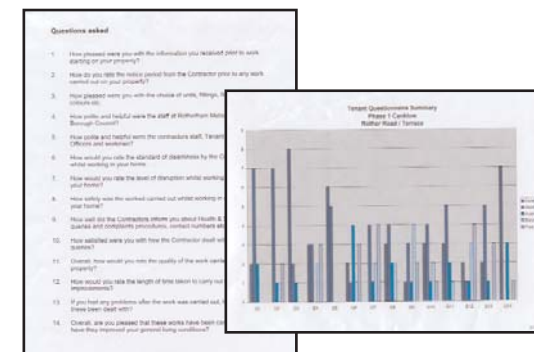
The Performance and Quality Unit has lead responsibility for the co-ordination, collection, analysis and reporting of quality data.

A programme of quality inspections has been introduced. A sample of 10% of repairs are inspected by Foremen each month. The primary purpose of the inspection is to assess the quality of the repair and ensure the customer is satisfied.

us increased knowledge on how the service is being delivered, while avoiding duplication and survey overload. Problems encountered during these inspections are rectified immediately.

Within the Decent Homes Programme, 100% of all improvements are inspected to assess the quality of work and level of customer satisfaction. This is followed up by a postal survey six months after completion to ensure continued satisfaction with the work undertaken.

100% of void dwellings, are inspected to ensure the work meets the required quality standard. Standard checklists ensure the quality inspection follows consistent standards.



These inspections support the postal and telephone customer satisfaction surveys, allowing

**8 Ensure that the procurement of all aspects of the repairs and maintenance service are subject to a rigorous, comprehensive and transparent process**

The Council has recently revised its corporate Procurement Strategy. This details a value-driven approach to reducing the 'total cost' of materials and services procured, ensuring improved quality and a transparent process.

Our Procurement Strategy is led by a corporate Best Practice Procurement Team to ensure that the following are effectively and consistently implemented:

- Use of purchasing consortia to drive improved value
- E-procurement, e-tendering, e-auctions, e-payment
- Clear procurement considerations and 'buying' criteria
- Effective management of the supplier base
- Partnering as a means of ensuring best value in procurement
- A range of measurable targets covering:
  - sustained savings
  - quality of service
  - on-time delivery performance
  - environmental performance
  - local buy objectives
  - supplier rationalisation
  - procurement efficiency
  - contract management

- training and development of staff involved in the procurement process

Within our partnership with RBT, priority is given to radically improving our entire approach to procurement. Significant work has already been undertaken to create a procurement infrastructure to support change in the above areas.

Suppliers and contractors are appointed following a competitive tendering process, using expertise from the central procurement service. Supply opportunities are widely advertised and, when required, suppliers are invited to bid.

Where appropriate, tenants and Members are involved in the full spectrum of procurement including:

- Identification of needs
- Specification design
- Development of tender documentation
- Development of award criteria
- Appraisal of suppliers and visits
- Post-tender reviews
- Ongoing monitoring of performance

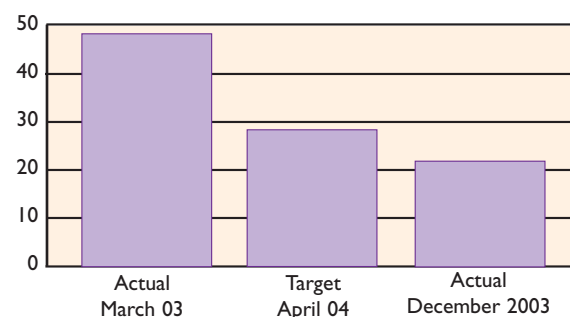
Benchmarking is used to assist in determining the value for money of competitive bids.

**9 Improve performance on voids**

Performance on void properties has progressively improved through focused management action. The September 2002 target of a 30-day turnaround time was not achieved. But since then, significant improvement has been achieved.

**Void Turnaround Time**

Actual March 03: 49 days  
 Target April 2004: 29 days  
 Actual December 03: 22.72 Days



Top quartile performance for metropolitan authorities during 2001/02 was an average of 60 days with the top performer being Walsall at 20 days.

We continue to improve and have set a new target of average time to taken to repair void properties of 15 days for 2005/06.

To provide a truly effective void service is essential to adopt an integrated approach. A Void Management Team ensures decisive and effective action is taken daily. Everyone who has a role works together to an agreed process focused on re-letting the property as soon as possible.

Key activities include:

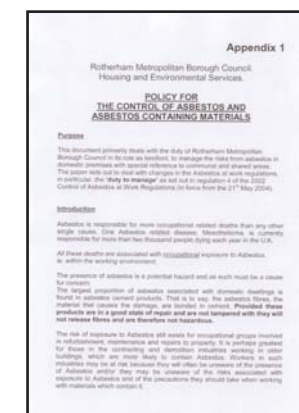
- Local Letting Strategies which allow maximum flexibility to house tenants based on locally determined criteria.
- Waiting lists are reviewed continuously to identify potential tenants.
- New 'property shop' displays are provided in Housing Offices to market available properties.
- Advertisements in local papers.
- Marketing to local stakeholders eg, hospitals, surgeries, Social Services etc.

When a property is to be vacated, the Void procedure commences immediately with inspections, assessment of work required, review of waiting lists etc. This proactive action minimises the potential for empty properties. In July 2003, 70% of void properties were pre-allocated.

Focused on continuous improvement, more demanding targets have been set for future years:

Target: April 2005 - 20 days  
 Target: April 2006 - 15 days

**10 Develop a policy on asbestos and inform tenants**



Our Asbestos Policy is based upon existing expertise and experience from:

- Our membership of the Asbestos Special Interest Group (within the Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities) which resulted in the creation of an authoritative report, Asbestos Procedures for Social Landlords, May 2001.

- Review of best practice in other Local Authorities (eg, Kirklees, Leeds, Sunderland etc)

Tenants have been involved in the development of the Policy from its inception to approval by the Policy Panel and Cabinet on 1st September 2003.

Tenants are informed of asbestos issues by the distribution of a leaflet to all tenants - Management of Asbestos – A Tenant's Guide. This includes:

- simple illustrations showing where asbestos is most commonly found
- advice on how to safeguard yourself against potential asbestos risks (ie, what NOT to do)
- advice on how to obtain further information and advice
- Information on asbestos issues included in the Tenant Handbook 'Welcome Home!'





Briefings on asbestos awareness have been given to all Technical Officers, Housing Officers and Operatives. There are regular updates as part of our Health & Safety procedures.

A dedicated 'Asbestos Help-Line' is being set up in Rotherham Connect to provide a high level of

advice to tenants on this subject, and staff are being trained.

Asbestos management is also a feature of our IT database strategy.

## 11 Develop systems to assess the value for money offered through partnership arrangements

We are committed to the Egan - Rethinking Construction principles of partnering and have successfully implemented its recommendations in our use of external contractors.

*Partnering is integral to our long-term plans, based on:*

- Joint planning
- Clear and understood objectives
- Full involvement of tenants in the procurement, measurement and monitoring of partners
- SMART performance indicators
- Performance reporting which is highly visible and makes comparisons (other providers, best practice benchmarking etc)
- A focus on continuous improvement

Our new approach to partnering is illustrated in our Decent Homes Programme. Two main contractors (Bramall and Wates) have been chosen and are working successfully through a formal management structure focusing on value for money and include:

- **Programme Board** - managing the overall direction of the Programme with Tenant and Member representation

- **Customer Focus Group** - reviewing customer feedback, input into the priorities of the Decent Homes Programme and ensuring the services provided meet customers' needs.

- **Value Engineering Group** - reviewing materials, processes, costs etc and ways in which reduced costs/greater value can be achieved. Significant savings have already been delivered in kitchens, bathrooms etc

*More specifically, we ensure value for money via:*

- Provision of timely budget management reports presented to management team, Members and tenant representatives
- Competitive tendering for repairs contracts
- Clear and measurable performance measures
- Comparison of each partner's performance against identical types of work.
- Customer feedback via visits and formal surveys
- Quality inspections to measure standard of work
- Benchmarking of service costs against similar organisations and type of work

## 12 Develop a long-term strategy to address the repair of the housing stock

Following the Beha Williams Norman Option Appraisal Report in June 2002 it became clear that none of the options (Stock Transfer, PFI, ALMO or Retention) at that time could fully address the capital and revenue needs. It recommended that, whilst no option should be disregarded that this stage, a detailed consultation exercise should be carried out with tenants, Members and staff to further inform the options study and take into account changes in Government policy.

A Steering Group (Council Housing Futures Group) of tenants and leaseholders was established from the Strategy Policy Panel, with representatives included from each of the Area Housing Panel. This Group, working with staff in the Housing Strategy and Tenant Involvement Units, appointed an Independent Tenant Adviser (PS consultants) to carry out a two phased consultation programme in December 2002 and May 2003. This included newsletters, roadshows, questionnaires, focus groups, freephone and conference.



In June 2003 the Group reported to Council their recommendation to pursue ALMO as the preferred option for addressing the repair of the housing stock and future management of the stock.

PFI was disregarded as tenants wanted to see a whole stock solution and PFI can only be used for up to 2,500 units. Stock Transfer was disregarded as tenants are strongly opposed to this option also the negative value of the stock (minus £200m) made this option unfeasible, despite it being able to meet both the capital and revenue funding gaps.

On 6th August 2003 Council endorsed the tenants' recommendation to pursue the ALMO option by submitting a bid to Round 4 of the ALMO Programme in December 2003

Stock Condition and Housing Needs information was updated in November 2003 to inform the Decent Homes Programme, the Sustainability Model, the ALMO bid and work with the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

A 7-year Capital and Revenue Maintenance Programme is being developed.

The Sustainability Model will assess the viability of estates of communities and their investment needs. The Model was drawn up using Council housing data only and, whilst this has been able to produce a traffic light system of sustainability, the ability to analyse results on data sets is limited. Working with the Neighbourhood Statistics Unit and the South Yorkshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder it has been agreed to develop this model further by using community boundaries (which are multi-tenure) based on output areas. This allows data to be collected and analysed for all tenures and will feed into both the Pathfinder Strategy, Housing Strategy and allow cross-region sub-region working.

We have agreed to disinvest in non-traditional housing stock. Each area of housing will be assessed individually and a local strategy for each area will be adopted, working with the residents in the communities. Strategies may include demolition etc.

## 13 Improve budgetary control mechanisms

Following inspection the Finance Team conducted a full review of the financial management regime.

Whilst good practice existed, the Team identified areas where budgetary control could be improved further. A new financial management approach was introduced. The principles behind this new approach are:

- **Visibility of performance** (communication of performance to management, peers, customers, Members)
- **Accountability** (ownership)
- **Timeliness** (regular reporting and ability to rectify problems quickly)
- **Future planning** (regular forecasting of out turns)
- **Integrated** (financial budgets/reports closely linked to strategic and operational plans)

- **Dynamic** (financial budget and reports reflect known or anticipated changes in our business environment such as new demands, changes to supplier costs, savings made etc)

Three-year rolling budgets are prepared as part of the long-term strategic planning of the Service. Within this, a detailed 12-month budget is prepared with the assumptions behind the budget calculation clearly stated. This 12-month budget is phased on a monthly basis with anticipated revenue/expenditure.

All budget holders have received training on budget preparation and monitoring.

To maximise budgetary control, monthly finance reports are presented within 10 working days of the month end. These new reports include analysis of planned, actual, variance and forecasted revenue/expenditure. Key exceptions to the plan

and highlighted together with a management summary of any issues of note that have affected the plan.

The Management Team reviews the finance report in detail on a monthly basis.

To ensure accountability, each budget holder receives a finance report detailing the same

planned, actual, variance and forecasted revenue/expenditure but specific to the budget holder's area of responsibility.

Individual budget holders operate commitment accounting to ensure expenditure remains within budget. If a variance is expected, this is reported early so that management action can be taken.

#### 14 Audit the performance information available and develop with tenants a performance management framework

We introduced a range of performance management disciplines and tools, but then recognised that our initial eagerness to implement new systems may have resulted in excessive reporting and duplication.

To ensure we have an integrated and effective approach to performance management based on the principle 'what matters, gets measured', we have developed a new Performance Management Framework (PMF).

The PMF has been created following consultation with management team, tenants, Policy Panel and Members.



To aid analysis, performance information is available to each neighbourhood office allowing interrogation of adverse variances.

To ensure a holistic approach, the PMF is used in the entire Housing Service including the Repairs and Maintenance Service.

The PMF includes the following key performance information:

Statutory measures  
(BV performance indicators)

- Financial performance
- Local performance measures
- Progress against business plan objectives
- Customer satisfaction

- Complaints and commendations
- Benchmarking comparisons

The PMF is highly visual using graphical representation, tabled comparisons, league tables, performance narratives, analysis against control targets

Measures have been put in place over the last 12 months that have resulted in District Audit validating all audited indicators in August 2003.

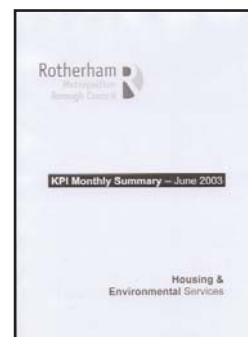
The measures were :

- Two Internal Performance & Quality Audits of all our KPIs in October 2002 and February 2003.
- An Internal Performance Development Audit of medium and high risk PIs plus KPIs with errors in the BVPP 2002/03 between January and June 2003.
- An Internal Audit assessment of medium and high risk PIs which was carried out in May and June 2003.

These audits followed procedures, endorsed and validated by our Corporate Performance Unit and District Audit.

During February and March 2003, managers, staff and customers were consulted on which KPIs they would like us to report against for 2003/04. 16 new indicators were developed, replacing many old, non-comparable KPIs to form our new KPI suite for 2003/04.

Our customers identified a number of key areas that require performance indicators to show them that we are focusing on the areas that are important to them.



KPIs were developed and incorporated into our new suite in the following areas:

- Repairs carried out in one visit
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Dog fouling prosecutions
- Littering prosecutions

Our new suite compliments the 'Programme Area Performance Plan' and the Service Business Plans for Housing and Environmental Services, which identifies how we will tackle the Programme Area's Seven Key Priorities for 2003 – 2006.

We consulted with tenant representatives, staff and management when setting targets for 2003/04,

Our customers are informed, monitor and discuss our performance using a number of methods:

- Tenant Policy Panels
- Attendance at our Scrutiny Panels
- Posters in all housing reception areas
- Bi-annual statistics in our 'Open House' newsletter

#### 15 Address all other weaknesses identified in the report

Other weaknesses have been identified and included within our Service Improvement Plan (SIP), led by a dedicated Transformation Team and involving tenants.

The Inspection Report was presented to Cabinet, Corporate Management Team and Policy Panel. In addition, the Report has been discussed widely with staff, trade unions and key partners.

Our response to the recommendation identified in the report was the early development of the SIP

and the targeting of resources to assist in the design and implementation of improvements. The SIP process has focussed on achieving a step-change in our Service and become integrated within the wider Housing Service and a long-term commitment to continuous improvement.

Detailed below are additional comments in response to other weaknesses contained within the Report.

#### 16 Communication

A Communications Change Group, a representative group of staff from across the Programme Area, has been formed to identify and implement improvements in communication. This has been highly successful and a range of improvements have been introduced.

We have used a variety of channels to improve communications (and ensure that consistent messages are communicated) so that the message is more likely to be received and understood. We have tried to focus on personal communications, wherever possible, and regular briefing by managers allows communication to be tailored to the audience, enabling two-way feedback to be provided to senior management.

Examples of regular communications include:

- Programme of weekly depot/area housing office briefings by the Head of Service and Executive Director

- Weekly team briefings by managers using a pre-determined team brief
- Fortnightly meetings with trade union representatives
- Full staff briefings by the Chief Executive and Executive Director for Housing & Environmental Services
- Articles in the staff newsletter, Foundations
- Staff notice boards
- Staff briefing letters
- Communication of Service performance
- Distribution and updates on the SIP
- Articles on the Council Intranet
- Regular programme of manager away days

Our performance is reliant on how we work with partners, inside and outside the Council. We have regular briefings to share our future plans and the SIP with them.

### 17 Delays in authorising jobs with inadequate information to tenants

Tenants and staff both recognise the finite nature of repairs budgets. Consequently we have to communicate honestly and regularly with them to ensure their understanding of the issue and involvement and ownership of the solutions.

Tenants will accept that repairs may not happen immediately, providing they have some certainty on when the work will be carried out or when a decision will be made.

A 'Transformation Team' has analysed the problem and an action plan to remedy the situation has been presented and approved. Delays in authorising jobs was caused by a variety of issues and not simply a budgetary issue. The Transformation Team reviewed the wider situation and provided recommendations to remedy this.

Key actions being implemented include:

- Clarification and communication of the repair responsibilities of Housing Services and the tenant
- Analysis of job requests to remove any duplicated jobs
- Analysis of outstanding inspections resulting in the bulk being transferred into programmed works

- Improved training for Rotherham Connect advisors to improve diagnosis and reduce the need for inspections
- Secondment of a Foreman to Technical Services to tackle backlog in inspections
- Issue of repair receipt, with reference number, to tenants when they request a repair in person at an area housing office
- Issue of appointment confirmation cards for inspections
- To increase the proportion of non-urgent repairs which are programmed, when requests are received, a receipt will be sent to the tenant explaining that the job is to be programmed, what will happen next, the expected time when the repair will be made, and what to do if further information is required
- The repairs system operated by Rotherham Connect will include this information should a tenant require an update

Tenant involvement is sought in developing the solutions and they will be updated on successful implementation.

### 18 Repair jobs not completed on first visit

'Right First Time' is an important measure of customer service and a key indicator for the effective use of our resources.

We have implemented the following:

- Introduction of a dedicated 'Repairs Team' in Rotherham Connect
- Comprehensive training of Rotherham Connect advisors and front-line housing office staff in the diagnosis of repairs
- Permanent technical staff in Rotherham Connect to assist in the diagnosis of repairs
- Regular training updates to staff
- Introduction of a repairs diagnosis instruction manual with simple illustrations and questions to ask to correctly identify the problem

- Programme of multi-skilling operatives – initial focus on Going Local pilot area with a target of 10% of operatives multi-skilled and an actual of 23% (August 2003). Plastering skills have been prioritised as a skill that will have the greatest beneficial impact on right first time rates.

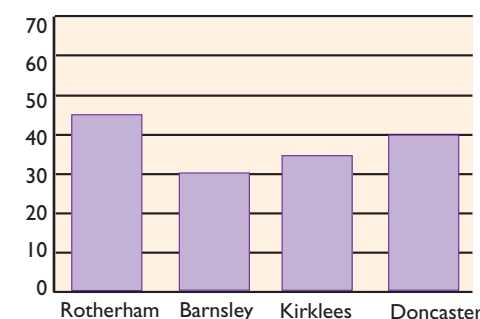
Right First time rates are reported monthly as part of the monthly management reports. Analysis is undertaken of jobs that are not completed on the first visit and lessons learnt are reviewed at depot, housing office and Rotherham Connect meetings.

### 19 High ratio of responsive repairs to planned paid from revenue

The need to reduce the proportion of responsive to planned repairs has been given top priority. A target of 40% responsive repairs has been agreed. Since March 2003 the proportion of responsive repairs has reduced to 55% of anticipated expenditure (45% planned) supported by a robust plan for achievement. We have set our maintenance budget at 60% planned maintenance and 40% responsive. Whilst we have not achieved this outturn yet, we have significantly improved performance from a planned maintenance value of 30% in 2002/03 to a present outturn of 46.94% and still improving.

This compares well with neighbouring authorities:

Rotherham: 45%      Barnsley: 30%  
Kirklees: 36%      Doncaster: 40%



The Annual Maintenance Plan has been developed on the basis of a 40/60 ratio. Through stock condition surveys, feedback from property visits and grouping of non-urgent repair requests into programmed repairs, we are making excellent progress in redressing this historic imbalance.

To accelerate this change, we have formed a 'Change Team' to review the current rate of improvement and develop a new action plan to drive this forward. This has included the creation of a new local authority benchmarking group on responsive/programme works to share best practice.

