

# REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF DWELLINGS



**GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

THE  
**HOUSING**  
UNIT

**GOOD PRACTICE IN HOUSING MANAGEMENT**  

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**GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

**REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF DWELLINGS**

Produced in conjunction with



The Department of the Environment and Local Government

and

The City and County Managers Association

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## FOREWORD

Over the past two decades the task of managing local authority housing has become more challenging from a range of perspectives. Although living standards in Ireland have generally improved over this period, the level of dependence on social welfare benefits among residents of public housing has remained stubbornly high and significant problems of criminal and anti-social behaviour have developed on some estates. Residents of local authority estates have also begun to demand a greater say in the management of the areas in which they live and like most modern consumers have developed higher expectations about the standards of service which they should receive from their local authority. At the same time, management practices within the public sector have changed dramatically, and Department of the Environment and Local Government statements of policy on housing have repeatedly exhorted local authorities to reform their traditional practices so that they can meet the new challenges of public housing management and keep in step with this wider reform process.

The establishment of the Housing Management Group in 1996 and the publication of its two reports in 1996 and 1998 marked a watershed in the development of public housing management practice in Ireland. These reports sketch out the broad framework which this reform process should follow. In the First Report, the Housing Management Group makes a series of recommendations in relation to housing management systems, tenancy matters, repairs and maintenance, lettings, rents and tenant involvement – all of which are intended to help local authorities achieve best practice in housing management. On the basis of the recommendations of its Second Report, the Housing Unit was established in order to continue and develop the work commenced by the Housing Management Group in identifying best practice in housing management.

The development of good practice guidelines on a range of aspects of housing management is a central step in this process. These guidelines build on the reform framework which is outlined in the Housing Management Group reports by providing more in-depth guidance on the steps which local authorities should implement in order

to achieve good practice in the various aspects of their housing management function. Furthermore, the guidelines also suggest a wide range of actions which, depending on their individual circumstances and resources, local authorities may strive to implement in order to achieve best practice in housing management.

These guidelines are intended to be a practical working tool for local authority housing managers and, with this in mind, the guidelines have been laid out in a user-friendly style, drawing on practical examples of reforms which have been put in place in different authorities around the country, and they provide checklists of the different stages which should be followed in implementing good practice. In the development of these guidelines, every effort has also been made to strike a balance between being overly general and overly prescriptive. Each local authority must decide on its own approach, having regard to the size and type of housing stock, the level of housing policy development, and the changing nature of the local housing environment. Some aspects of the guidelines will only apply to the larger housing authorities, with complex staffing structures; other parts are more relevant to rural authorities with a more dispersed stock of dwellings. However, it is hoped that all public housing practitioners will find in them some relevant suggestions which they can utilise in their own local authority.

These guidelines draw on an extensive process of consultation with local authority housing practitioners across the country. This consultation was carried out by the Housing Unit staff and through the medium of the five Regional Housing Practitioner Networks which were established in 1998 in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas on good practice among local authority housing staff. The compilation of the good practice manuals was directed by a sub-committee of the Housing Unit Consultative Committee which is made up of representatives of the key stakeholders in social housing in Ireland. The details of the process of compiling these guidelines are included in acknowledgements to this document.

Michelle Norris  
Director  
The Housing Unit

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Author: Mr Brian Brennan  
County Architect  
South Dublin County Council

Editor: Michelle Norris  
Director  
Housing Unit

Members of Housing Unit Good Practice Sub-Committee:

Mr Aidan Kinch, Housing, Rents and Tenure Section  
Department of the Environment and Local Government

Mr Bernard Thompson, General Secretary  
National Association of Building Co-operatives

Mr Donal McManus, Executive Director  
Irish Council for Social Housing

Mr Michael Malone, County Manager  
Laois County Council

Mr Jim Carson, Administrative Officer, Housing and Community Department  
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Mr Brendan Kenny, Principal Officer, Housing and Community Department  
Dublin Corporation

Project Advisors: Maurice Rooney and Maurice Jennings  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive

## SECTION ONE

The repair and maintenance of dwellings is one of the most important and most challenging elements of the public housing service. Repair and maintenance usually accounts for the largest proportion of local authority housing management expenditure and the quality of this service is one of the main determinants of customer satisfaction. In recent years the local authority housing repairs and maintenance service has been subject to widespread criticism for high costs, inefficiency and slowness in carrying out repairs. However, improving the quality of repairs and maintenance is often a complex task since this service is generally provided by a variety of administrative, professional and technical staff; it is often provided by several different sections within local authorities and elements of its delivery may be contracted out to private sector agencies.

Section One of these good practice guidelines highlights the reasons why the repair and maintenance of dwellings is such an important housing management task; it outlines the challenges which housing managers must overcome, and the issues and policies which they should consider if they are to improve repairs and maintenance practice within their local authority. On the basis of this discussion, objectives are identified and priorities for action are outlined.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN THE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF DWELLINGS**

Under the terms of the housing legislation, local authorities have primary responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the public housing stock. The right of local authorities to reconstruct, enlarge or improve any dwelling which they own is laid down in the 1966 Housing Act and the minimum standards to which local authority accommodation should be maintained are prescribed by the 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.

In recent decades the obligations of local authorities in regard to repair and maintenance have been modified somewhat. The tenancy agreement provisions which are set out in Article 83 of the 1980 Housing Regulations, for example, confer some responsibility for maintenance of parts of the interior of dwellings on tenants, and the 1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act allows local authorities to delegate aspects of their housing management function to a designated body. Although this division of responsibilities between the landlord and tenants can help to maximise the resources coming into the maintenance programme, it also raises further challenges for local authorities in that it increases the complexity of the housing maintenance task. Furthermore, it does not diminish the responsibility of local authorities to repair and maintain aspects of the public housing stock in order to fulfil their legal obligations as landlord.

As already mentioned, repair and maintenance is significant from the financial perspective as it usually accounts for the largest proportion of local authority housing management expenditure. Over £55 million of the total of £124.79 million expenditure by local authorities on public housing management in 1998, for



example, was spent on the repairs and maintenance service. Achieving value for money and effective use of this investment is crucial in view of the high levels of expenditure on repairs and maintenance and also because this service plays a vital role in the conservation of the housing stock. Failure to invest adequately in repairs and maintenance will lead, over time, to erosion in the value of this publicly-funded asset, which is worth some £8 billion in replacement cost terms, and will necessitate greater expenditure in the longer term on refurbishment projects.

The repairs and maintenance service is also a vital component of the wider housing management service and ineffective repairs and maintenance service has negative knock-on implications for the efficiency of the wider local authority housing service. Re-letting of dwellings cannot proceed speedily, for example, if the maintenance service does not bring dwellings up to lettable standard swiftly.

Finally, the maintenance service has a strong impact on customer satisfaction with the wider housing service. Housing repair and maintenance is the service which most regularly brings tenants into contact with their local authority. Consequently, if tenants experience difficulties in having repairs carried out it is likely to negatively affect their perception of the overall performance of the local authority. More importantly, a well-maintained housing stock can greatly enhance the quality of life and the social well-being of tenants, while, on the other hand, poor quality living accommodation can have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the residents of local authority estates.

## 1.2 **ACHIEVING GOOD PRACTICE IN REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE: ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Achieving good practice in the repair and maintenance of dwellings is a complex task, therefore a wide range of issues and policies need to be considered in the development of a programme to improve practice in this area. Some of these issues and policies are relevant only to the repairs and maintenance service; others apply to the wider local authority housing service and indeed to the entire public sector.

In common with all public service management reform programmes, plans to improve practice in the repair and maintenance of local authority dwellings should take account of the following issues:

- ◆ The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) identifies the establishment of systems of performance monitoring as the key to achieving good practice in public sector management. Therefore, the identification of a set of performance indicators as the basis for assessing performance should be a central element of any proposed strategy to achieve good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service. These indicators should be related to the specific local needs and requirements of each local authority and they should be regularly reviewed, updated and monitored to meet changing conditions and circumstances.
- ◆ Management information systems should be established in order to collate all of the information necessary for performance measurement. This management information should relate directly to the chosen performance indicators; be easily collected; readily collated; clearly presented and regularly reviewed. It should also aid problem solving and decision making and assist in policy formation. Repairs and maintenance management information systems should, ideally, be linked to the other main housing service systems such as tenancy updates, vacant dwellings, lettings, finance and budget control.

A range of recent developments which have impacted on the entire local authority housing service also have implications for the reform of repairs and maintenance practice. These include:

- ◆ The programme for the reform of the management of local authorities, particularly the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) to develop

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policy on each of the main functional areas within all local authorities. In most cases this process has included the establishment of a Strategic Policy Committee which focuses on the housing area and is serviced by a Director of Housing.

- ◆ Radical initiatives to localise housing management structures and to include tenants in management decisions. The widespread development of these initiatives has seen the transformation of traditional housing management practices in many local authorities. Tenant participation projects, estate agreements and housing fora are some examples of developments of this type which demand a new range of expertise from housing practitioners, and make them directly accountable to the customer.
- ◆ The recent expansion of the remit of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) to include local authorities. This has obvious implications for public housing management since tenants of local authority estates are more likely to be living in poverty than any other section of the population. Under the terms of the NAPS, public agencies are required to 'poverty proof' their services; in other words to ensure they do not create or perpetuate existing inequalities and that they contribute to achieving a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities.
- ◆ The identification of the need for close co-ordination between the maintenance service and other areas of housing management. The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group identifies the dispersal of the functions which go to make up the housing management service across different sections within local authorities as one of the main factors which impede good practice in public housing management. As a result of this method of organisation, the delivery of services on estates is often characterised by lack of co-ordination, conflicting priorities and unsatisfactory standards. Good practice in repairs and maintenance requires that the maintenance service should be effectively co-ordinated with the other aspects of the housing management service in order to ensure that a comprehensive service is delivered to tenants.

Finally, in developing programmes of good practice, local authority housing practitioners should also take account of the following issues, which are particularly relevant to the repairs and maintenance service:

- ◆ Improving repairs and maintenance requires long-term planning because the greatest savings in maintenance are achieved at the design stage. Good practice requires that maintenance objectives are included as a key part of the general housing design brief issued to all architects and designers involved in new build and refurbishment projects.
- ◆ The repair and maintenance of dwellings is one of the few elements of the public housing service for which responsibility is shared between the local authority and tenants. In order to achieve good practice in repairs and maintenance, it is vital that the different responsibilities of these two partners are clarified and that tenants are encouraged and facilitated to play an active role in maintaining their home.
- ◆ The Department of the Environment and Local Government value for money study on housing maintenance which was carried out in 1999 identifies the over-concentration of resources on response maintenance and the lack of a coherent planned maintenance strategy as the most serious problem in current maintenance practice. The housing maintenance service in four of the eight local authorities surveyed for this study focused solely on responding to repairs requests from tenants and these authorities had no preventive maintenance programme of cyclical preventive maintenance and programmed repairs. Although there will always be a demand for response maintenance to deal with emergencies and to ensure the safety of tenants, a well-developed programme of preventive maintenance is vital in order to preserve the condition of the housing stock.
- ◆ The Department of the Environment and Local Government 1993 *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management* also raises a number of important criticisms of the repairs and maintenance service. These include: an over-emphasis on reducing maintenance expenditure rather than achieving better value for money; the neglect of the most critical maintenance work by the response maintenance service, particularly the failure to carry out necessary works to prevent the rapid deterioration of the dwelling and the *ad hoc* nature of repair operations which tend to be inefficient in their use of personnel and materials, with high unproductive time content and minimum scheduling of jobs.

- ◆ Like all other aspects of public housing management, good management of staff resources is the key to improving practice in repairs and maintenance. However, the management of maintenance staff poses particular challenges as the staff who provide this service may be attached to a range of departments within the local authority, or may not even be employed directly by the authority.
- ◆ The aims of Local Agenda 21 such as achieving higher densities, energy efficiency and overall sustainability are now an integral part of housing management objectives and should obviously be taken into account in all decisions regarding materials selection, energy use and design of work carried out by the repairs and maintenance service.
- ◆ It is also vital to ensure that all maintenance operations comply with health and safety legislative requirements and regulations and that repairs and maintenance staff and contractors adhere to these regulations in carrying out their work.

### 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to help local authority housing practitioners deliver a high-quality repairs and maintenance service, having regard to available resources.

These guidelines are also intended to help local authorities to develop a repair and maintenance strategy which will achieve the following objectives:

- ◆ Meet statutory obligations in relation to the maintenance of dwellings
- ◆ Maximise the physical life of each dwelling
- ◆ Secure the well-being of its users
- ◆ Protect and enhance the investment value of dwellings and through this the value of the public housing stock
- ◆ Achieve value for money for all expenditure on the service
- ◆ Increase the proportion of maintenance resources which are allocated to preventive maintenance, to 65 per cent of total, as is recommended in the *First Report* of the Housing Management Group
- ◆ Identify performance indicators which will help to assess the quality of the service on an ongoing basis
- ◆ Establish management information systems in order to collate the information necessary for performance measurement
- ◆ Ensure accountability to the customer in the management of the service
- ◆ Facilitate and encourage tenant participation in the housing maintenance service
- ◆ Ensure that the repairs and maintenance service does not perpetuate existing disadvantage among tenants of public housing estates
- ◆ Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of housing maintenance staff, provide appropriate opportunities for staff training and development, and facilitate and encourage staff participation in decision-making regarding the management of the service
- ◆ Co-ordinate the repairs and maintenance service with the other elements of the public housing service in order to provide a comprehensive service to tenants.

## 1.4 **ACHIEVING GOOD PRACTICE IN THE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF DWELLINGS: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

These guidelines are not intended to be all-embracing in relation to the management of the repairs and maintenance service. Each local authority must decide on the details of its own approach, having regard to the size and type of housing stock, the level of housing policy development and the changing nature of the local housing environment. However, several key elements of the repairs and maintenance service can be singled out as particular priorities for reform in the majority of local authorities, and it is these priorities for action which are the focus of the guidelines.

The guidelines on good practice in the repairs and maintenance service are set out here in four sections:

- ◆ Section Two examines good practice in the response maintenance service. This section devotes particular attention to the issues of: collecting maintenance complaints, prioritising response maintenance requests, managing response times to repair requests, and monitoring the effectiveness of the service.
- ◆ Section Three sets out the stages which should be followed in developing and implementing a preventive maintenance programme and examines the issues associated with monitoring the performance of the programme after its establishment.
- ◆ Section Four examines the different responsibilities of local authorities and tenants in the maintenance of public housing and suggests mechanisms for facilitating and encouraging tenants to play an active role in the maintenance of their homes.
- ◆ Section Five includes a range of recommendations for the effective management of the repairs and maintenance staff and for the development of their skills.

In the case of each of these priority areas the guidelines suggest a range of reforms which each local authority should implement in order to achieve good practice in repairs and maintenance. These 'Good Practice Recommendations' identify a base-line level of service, which all local authorities should achieve in order to provide a satisfactory level of service to the customer. Furthermore, the guidelines also include a wide range of 'Best Practice Suggestions' – intended to provide ideas on reforms which local authority housing practitioners may wish to implement in order to achieve excellence in the management of the repairs and maintenance service.

## SECTION TWO

The Introduction to these guidelines highlighted a range of common problems in local authority response maintenance in relation to housing. These include: poor value for money; slowness in carrying out repairs; neglect of the most critical maintenance work, particularly the failure to carry out necessary works to prevent the rapid deterioration of the dwelling; the *ad hoc* and inefficient nature of repair operations which tend to be uneconomical in their use of personnel and materials. In addition the over-concentration of resources on response maintenance, and the consequent lack of preventive maintenance, was raised as the most serious inefficiency in the wider maintenance system.

In order to overcome these problems local authorities need to adopt a more pro-active and strategic approach to the management of the response maintenance which will increase the effectiveness and value for money of this element of the repairs and maintenance service and free up resources for investment in preventive maintenance. This approach should be based on the development of a strategic policy on response maintenance, the instigation of a range of reforms to aid the efficient implementation of this policy, and the establishment of processes to assess the performance of the service on an ongoing basis.

### 2.1 **DEVELOPING A RESPONSE MAINTENANCE POLICY**

## GOOD PRACTICE IN RESPONSE MAINTENANCE

The 1992 Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act requires local authorities to develop statements of policy on housing management. The Department of the Environment and Local Government memorandum on the implementation of this requirement emphasises that improving the effectiveness and value for money of the response maintenance service should receive particular attention in these policy statements.

There is evidence, however, that many of the housing policy statements which have been produced by local authorities do not meet the aims and objectives demanded of them by this memorandum. Many statements provide an inadequate basis for the strategic management of the housing service – they are mainly concerned with describing the service, the aims which they set out for improving the service are largely aspirational, and they do not specify how these aims will be achieved or how the authority's performance in meeting these aims will be measured.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 1:**

Developing Statements of Policy on Response Maintenance

- ◆ Local authorities should revise their statements of policy on the response maintenance system with a view to developing statements which will provide a framework for strategic management of the service.



- ◆ These statements should address the following issues:
  - The division of maintenance responsibilities between the landlord and tenants
  - Procedures for categorising maintenance requests
  - Target response times for each category of maintenance request
  - Procedures for monitoring the achievement of these response times
  - Procedures for assessing customer satisfaction with the service
  - Procedures for addressing customer complaints.
  
- ◆ The details of the statement of policy on response maintenance should be determined by each local authority on the basis of consultation with both tenants and staff, and a consideration of the strategic needs of the organisation. However, in order to aid the development of their policy, local authorities may wish to consult the checklist of suggested items for inclusion in this statement which is provided on the opposite page.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 2:**

## Communicating Response Maintenance Policy to Tenants

- ◆ Each local authority should ensure that its policy on response maintenance is effectively communicated to tenants using the procedures which are outlined in Section Four of these good practice guidelines.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 3:**

## Communicating Response Maintenance Policy to Staff

- ◆ Each local authority should ensure that its policy on response maintenance is effectively communicated to staff using the procedures which are outlined in Section Five of these good practice guidelines.

**STATEMENTS OF POLICY ON  
RESPONSE MAINTENANCE –**

**CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS**

**MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORD AND TENANT**

- ◆ Maintenance responsibilities of the local authority ✓
- ◆ Maintenance responsibilities of tenants
- ◆ Details of the authority's policy on charging tenants for repairs when the response maintenance section is called to carry out work which is the responsibility of the tenant ✓
- ◆ Details of any exceptions which the local authority is prepared to make to this division of responsibilities and the grounds on which such exceptions will be made such as poverty proofing and sustainable use of resources ✓
- ◆ Procedures for ensuring that tenants fulfil all of their maintenance responsibilities ✓
- ◆ Procedures for encouraging tenants to play an active role in the maintenance of their homes ✓

**CATEGORISING AND RESPONDING TO RESPONSE MAINTENANCE REQUESTS**

- ◆ Procedures for categorising response maintenance requests ✓
- ◆ Target response times for each of these categories ✓

**PRE- AND POST-JOB INSPECTIONS**

- ◆ Statement of the occasions when pre- and post-job inspections of response maintenance work is appropriate ✓
- ◆ Targets for the frequency of pre- and post-job inspections ✓

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

- ◆ Procedures for assessing the extent of completion of repairs requests within the target response times ✓
- ◆ Procedures for surveying the satisfaction of individual customers with the response maintenance service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for consulting members of tenants' and residents' associations regarding the performance of the response maintenance service ✓

**CUSTOMER CARE**

- ◆ Details of the procedures for making a complaint about the repairs and maintenance service ✓
- ◆ Details of the local authority's procedures for addressing customer complaints including target response terms and its policy on compensation of tenants for damage to their property ✓

## 2.2 REPAIRS REPORTING SYSTEMS

The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group points out that repair requests which are expressed in vague terms or are wrongly reported by either tenants or staff lead to delays and inefficiencies in the maintenance service. On this basis the report identifies the establishment of effective arrangements for the reporting of repairs as one of the key reforms which should be implemented by local authorities in order to achieve good practice in the repairs and maintenance service.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 4:**

#### Repairs Reporting Systems

- ◆ Local authorities should establish fast, simple, easy-to-use methods for requesting repairs.
- ◆ In the interests of poverty proofing of the repairs and maintenance service each local authority should ensure that its procedure for reporting of response maintenance requests does not impose an undue financial burden on tenants. This can be achieved by establishing locally-based maintenance offices and by providing a free phone service for repairs requests.
- ◆ Local authorities should establish procedures to allow tenants to make emergency repairs requests on a 24-hour basis by means of a telephone answering service, for example.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 5:**

#### Details of Repairs Requests

- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that as much detail as possible is recorded on each repair request, in order to ensure that it can be properly classified and that tenants can be informed that the repair is their personal responsibility if appropriate. Local authorities should also ensure that the relevant staff are properly trained to carry out these duties. Information on the provision of appropriate training for these staff is contained in Section Five of these guidelines.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 6:**

## Repairs Appointments Procedures

- ◆ It is good practice to operate an appointments procedure with tenants to secure access to their dwelling for the purposes of response maintenance.
- ◆ In the case of emergency repairs such an appointment should be made at the time when the repair is initially reported.
- ◆ Contact details should also be obtained from tenants at this time and every effort should be made to ensure that they are provided with adequate notice of the deferral or cancellation of the job.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 7:**

## Repairs Acknowledgement Systems

- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that tenants receive a written acknowledgement of all repair requests.
- ◆ This acknowledgement should include details of the priority which the repair request has been given and the timeframe in which the work will be completed.

## 2.3 PRIORITISING RESPONSE MAINTENANCE REQUESTS

In the interests of active management of the response maintenance service, local authorities should establish a system to prioritise repair requests and to set target response times for each category of repair.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 8:**

#### Prioritising Maintenance Requests

- ◆ Local authorities should establish a system which classifies all valid response requests into the following categories:
  - *emergency repairs*, which include situations where there is a risk to the life of the tenant or general public
  - *urgent repairs*, which include situations where there is a risk to the landlord's and/or the tenant's property
  - *routine repairs*, which include situations where there is no risk to the tenant or to the property but the repair is not included under the preventive maintenance programme.

### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 1:** Classification of Emergency Maintenance Requests

In the interests of achieving best practice in the prioritisation of response maintenance requests, housing practitioners should aim to have less than 10 per cent of total repair requests classified as emergencies, as is recommended in the *First Report* of the Housing Management Group.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 9:**

#### Response Times

- ◆ All response maintenance work should have a targeted response time. These response times should be agreed in consultation with tenants' representatives and service delivery staff, and they should comply broadly with the following recommendations:
  - *emergency*: make safe immediately and target completion of all key works within two to three working days of categorisation
  - *urgent*: make safe immediately and target completion of all key works within five to ten working days of categorisation
  - *routine*: target completion of all key works within eight to twelve weeks of categorisation.

## 2.4 RECORDING RESPONSE MAINTENANCE REQUESTS

The establishment of an effective system for recording repairs is vital for the efficient management of this system of repair classification. The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group also points out that an effective repairs recording system can assist local authorities in identifying delays in the repairs service, monitoring performance and monitoring management information.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 10:**

#### Recording Repairs

- ◆ Local authorities should establish a computerised system for recording all response repairs requests. This system should:
  - record the priority classification of the repair
  - record the details of the work required
  - identify who is carrying out the work – a contractor or a direct labour force
  - record the response deadline
  - record the date of any inspections
  - record arrangements for access to the dwelling
  - record the completion date of the repair
  - record the actual costs of the repair.

### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 2:**

#### Response Repairs Recording Systems

In the interests of achieving best practice in the management of the response maintenance service, local authorities should consider establishing a response repairs recording system which can track individual repair jobs, pinpoint any delays and produce management information for the purpose of performance monitoring. Suggestions regarding the indicators which could be employed to measure the performance of the response maintenance service are set out in part 2.7 of this section.

## 2.5 **RESPONSE TIME SYSTEMS**

In the interests of ensuring efficient use of response maintenance personnel and resources, each local authority should develop and implement systems to strategically manage the timeframe in which the maintenance department responds to routine maintenance requests.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 11:**

#### Response Time Systems

- ◆ Local authority housing practitioners should develop systems to group responses to routine repair requests into 'full day' or 'full week' work programmes on a trade, estate and area basis.
- ◆ These response time systems should be actively enforced and the extent to which staff adhere to these arrangements should be closely monitored by the local authority.
- ◆ However, response time systems should allow for prioritisation of response requests from elderly or disabled tenants and households with young children and for situations where significant energy or water wastage can be avoided.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 12:**

#### Strategic Management of Response Time Systems

- ◆ In the interests of achieving efficiency in the management of the response maintenance service, it should be understood that dealing with emergency and urgent repairs could initially mean isolating defective services or removing defective components. However, where possible all making good should be completed within the target completion times for these categories of response repairs.
- ◆ In the case of routine repairs, it should be understood that ensuring the efficiency of the maintenance operation is the key management objective and that this may involve time delays to assist job scheduling and materials acquisition.

## 2.6 PRE- AND POST-JOB INSPECTIONS

Inspection of response maintenance jobs is costly in terms of staff resources. Good practice in the management of the response maintenance service requires that local authorities should seek to minimise the frequency of pre-job inspections as much as is practicable.

Implementing the recommendations for improving the procedures for recording the details of repairs requests which were outlined earlier in this section would make a significant contribution to achieving this aim. However, the development and implementation of a clear policy on the use of pre- and post-job inspection is also necessary in order to achieve good practice in the management of the response repairs service.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 13:**

#### Pre-Job Inspection Policy

- ◆ Local authorities should develop a clear policy on the need and frequency of pre-job inspection which is readily understood by all housing staff and tenants alike and which allows for pre-job inspection only in the following circumstances:
  - When the repair content is not clear
  - When previous similar requests have been made by the tenant
  - When the urgency of the job is not clear
  - When the projected job content and costs are high
  - When possible damage by tenants is suspected
  - When the repair may be re-chargeable to tenant.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 14:**

#### Post-Job Customer Care

- ◆ On completion of each response maintenance job, written confirmation of the tenant's satisfaction with the work should be obtained.



**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 15:**

## Post-Job Inspection Policy

- ◆ Local authorities should develop a clear policy on post-job inspection which is readily understood by all housing staff and tenants and which provides for post-job inspection only in the following circumstances:
  - Where written confirmation of the tenant's satisfaction with the job is not obtained or where the tenant makes a complaint about the quality of the work
  - Where the job content and costs are high
  - Where the job is an emergency repair which has implications for the health and safety of tenants.

In the interests of quality control local authorities should also ensure that a sample of all jobs is inspected on a random basis.

## 2.7 **RESPONSE MAINTENANCE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

In common with all other aspects of the local authority housing service the establishment of a system of performance indicators is a vital step in achieving good practice in the management of the response maintenance service. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring housing practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 16:**

#### Response Maintenance Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the response maintenance service local authorities should compare the numbers of repair requests received with the numbers completed on an annual basis.
- ◆ They should also ensure that the extent of adherence to annual budget estimates for response maintenance expenditure is monitored on a monthly basis and is subject to a formal quarterly review.
- ◆ Compare the number of response requests received with numbers completed within target completion times.

**Best Practice Suggestion No. 3:**Response Maintenance  
Performance Indicators

In order to achieve best practice in response maintenance local authorities should consider developing a comprehensive system of performance indicators. These performance indicators could include the following:

- Number of repairs requested by priority category, trade and estate
- Number of emergency, urgent and routine repairs completed as a percentage of all jobs carried out. Best practice in the management of the response repairs service dictates that less than 10 per cent of response repairs should be categorised as emergencies
- Number of pre-inspected and post-inspected repairs by category and as percentage of all jobs undertaken
- Number of jobs completed within target completion times by category, trade and estate and by contractor or direct labour organisation
- Number of jobs outstanding by category, trade and estate and by contractor or direct labour organisation
- Number and percentage of pre-inspections not completed within target time
- Number of no-access jobs by category, trade and estate, and as percentage of all jobs requested
- Proportion of repair appointments kept by direct labour organisation and contractor
- Number of repairs per dwelling per annum
- Average cost of repairs per dwelling per annum.

## SECTION THREE

The Introduction to these guidelines highlighted the lack of a programme of preventive maintenance of the housing stock as one of the main inefficiencies in the local authority repairs and maintenance service. Section Two set out a range of reforms to the response maintenance service which should help to free up resources for investment in preventive maintenance.

In order to achieve good practice in preventive maintenance, local authorities should collate a range of basic information on the housing stock and establish and implement a programme of works necessary to preserve the condition of the housing stock and to prevent its deterioration. Local authority housing practitioners who wish to achieve excellence in the management of their overall maintenance programme may wish to establish a programme which integrates long-term, medium-term and short-term maintenance planning.

### 3.1 **COLLATING PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE INFORMATION**

## GOOD PRACTICE IN PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

The first step in the development of a preventive maintenance programme is the collation of a database of the most up-to-date information available on all sections of the housing stock. This task can be made more manageable if it is broken down into a series of chronological steps which can be implemented over a period of time.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 17:**

##### Property Overviews

- ◆ Local authorities should put together an overview of each property in their stock of dwellings.
- ◆ This property overview should consist of tables listing all estates in alphabetical order and identifying the following basic information on each estate :
  - number of dwellings
  - date of construction
  - the type of dwellings – low rise, medium rise or multi-storey
  - built form – traditional construction or system built
  - tenure mix – percentage of rented and tenant-purchased dwellings.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 18:**

## Estate Manuals

- ◆ On the basis of this property overview, local authorities should develop an estate manual for each estate in their stock, which should contain the following additional information:
  - drawings showing the basic layout of the dwellings as they were originally built
  - details of the house type mix – the percentage of old people's dwellings, special and family dwellings, etc
  - construction drawings for each house type
  - the name of the original contractor and architect, if available
  - details of the main events in maintenance history of the estate, including: electrical upgrades; dates of last re-paint; details of any major upgrades or refurbishment programmes which have been carried out; details of frequently-recurring breakdown items in the dwellings.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 19:**

## Maintenance Profiles

- ◆ On the basis of the information contained in their property overviews and estate manuals, local authorities should put together a maintenance profile for each estate in their stock. This maintenance profile should address the following issues:
  - Urgent inspection and essential works. For example, is the electrical installation so old that it needs an immediate upgrade; have gas heating boilers received their annual service?
  - Forward maintenance plans for the next five to seven years establishing, for example, the date of the next re-painting programme and the date of the next windows replacement programme.
  - Financial expenditure plans for the estate over the next two cycles of the preventive maintenance programme.

## 3.2 BUILDING INSPECTIONS

The next step in the development of a preventive maintenance programme is the establishment of a system of cyclical inspections of dwellings which are intended to assess the general condition of the building and to identify any essential works which should be carried out in order to preserve the quality of the dwelling or to prevent its deterioration.

This involves placing each dwelling and estate in a recurring inspection timeframe which is generally implemented over a five- to seven-year cycle. In order to comply with the health and safety legislation, this cycle of building inspection should be augmented with more frequent inspection cycles for key service components such as gas boilers, lighting to common staircases, and escape routes.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 20:**

#### Cyclical Inspection of Dwellings

- ◆ Local authorities should establish programmes to inspect their stock of dwellings according to a five- to seven-year cycle. This cyclical inspection programme should achieve the following objectives:
  - Provide an authoritative condition report on each unit of housing stock at a given point in time
  - Provide accurate strategic information for the future preventive works programme, for example the need for re-wiring, window/door replacement and major structural repair
  - Assess the value for money and effectiveness of previous maintenance programmes
  - Provide the information necessary for accurate costing of the preventive works programme and for the identification of spending priorities
  - Provide the information for a reliable condition report on each dwelling which can be made available to tenants if requested
  - Facilitate tenant participation in the preventive maintenance programme by including tenants in the inspection process and in the assessment of the preventive works programme, particularly in the identification of spending priorities and in the development of estate development plans for each housing estate. Section Four of these guidelines includes more detailed instructions on how this can be achieved in practice.

### 3.3 DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME OF PREVENTIVE WORKS

The results of the preventive inspections should allow local authorities to develop a programme of preventive works which are administered to all dwellings in their housing stock over a five- to seven-year cycle. In the case of flats and apartments a shorter cycle of preventive works may be necessary.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 21:**

##### Preventive Works to Dwellings

- ◆ On the basis of their programme of cyclical inspection of dwellings, local authorities should establish a preventive works programme which should include all necessary repairs to the main elements and components of each dwelling.
- ◆ The details of the preventive works programme will obviously vary according to local factors such as the quality of the authority's housing stock. However, in order to achieve good practice in housing management it should include the following maintenance works:
  - overhaul of roof
  - cleaning and repair of all rainwater outlets, gutters and down pipes
  - repair and replacement of all defective timber components at roof eaves, soffit and verge locations
  - repair and replacement of all defective window and door components – in the case of a major replacement, this will involve up-grading to high performance double-glazed units
  - re-painting of all timber components in appropriate paint or other protective system
  - re-painting of all external wall finishes – although usually only on every second preventive maintenance cycle or every ten to fourteen years
  - checking and servicing of all electrical, sanitary, kitchen and heating systems, and the up-grade, repair and replacement of these as necessary – all records/ certificates of electrical and gas/oil boiler servicing should be retained
  - checking, cleaning and servicing of all external drainage systems and replacement of all lids and covers as necessary.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 22:**

## Preventive Works to Flats and Apartment Blocks

- ◆ The preventive works programme should include the following provisions for the maintenance of communal areas and blocks of flats and apartments:
  - re-decoration throughout (minimum three, maximum five-year cycle)
  - renewal of floor coverings, stair treads and nosings, handrails and balustrades
  - repair of lighting in communal areas, emergency lighting, fire escape signs and alarms
  - checking of fire doors and door closers
  - checking of security and access controls.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 23:**

## Preventive Works and Customer Care

- ◆ Local authorities should try to minimise disturbance to tenants during the preventive works programme and to give tenants maximum opportunity to influence decisions regarding its operation. Section Four of these guidelines includes suggestions on how this can be achieved in practice.



### 3.4 DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMONLY-RECURRING MAINTENANCE JOBS

The establishment of a programme of preventive works to dwellings in order to maximise the physical life of the housing stock is a vital element of good practice in preventive maintenance. However, a range of other large-scale maintenance demands which arise regularly should also be taken into account in order to achieve excellence in the management of the preventive maintenance programme. This section outlines a range of suggestions on the management of three of the most commonly-recurring of these demands: the repair of dwellings which become vacant and must be re-let, fire and storm damage maintenance, and the adaptation of dwellings for disabled tenants.

#### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 4:** Developing a Re-Lets Maintenance Plan

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the preventive maintenance service, local authorities should consider developing a re-lets maintenance plan.
- ◆ This plan should be based on an analysis of the numbers of re-lets as a percentage of total stock over the preceding three to five years and on projections of re-let numbers over the next two years which are calculated on the basis of this analysis.
- ◆ The details of the re-lets maintenance plan should be determined by each local authority. However, in order to guide this process of re-letting, a checklist of suggested items for inclusion in the re-lets plan is included on page 34.
- ◆ Local authorities may wish to explore the possibility of up-grading dwellings at the time of re-letting in order to ensure that all dwellings are brought to a common quality and safety standard. Among the works which could be carried out at the stage of re-letting are the following:
  - electrical upgrade to meter, cooker protection and immersion installation
  - re-wiring and additional socket provision
  - insulation upgrade and draught proofing works
  - installation of central heating system
  - installation of double glazed window systems as appropriate
  - installation of smoke alarms, door security and monitored phone systems for elderly or disabled tenants.

- ◆ In order to minimise the works which need to be carried out to dwellings on re-letting, local authorities should consider making any agreement on tenant transfers to alternative accommodation conditional on dwellings being left in a satisfactory, safe and good decorative condition with no outstanding tenant-responsible repairs.
- ◆ Local authorities should have a clear policy on the extent of redecoration work which will be carried out to dwellings on re-letting. This policy should allow for maximum involvement of the incoming tenant in re-decoration through the provision of free materials, vouchers, or rent-free periods to fund re-decoration work by the tenant.
- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the repair and maintenance of dwellings for re-letting, local authorities may wish to put in place a formal re-lets compliance procedure, under the terms of which the head of the maintenance department receives competent technical clarification on the following:
  - The dwelling is suitable and safe for re-letting, to the landlord’s re-letting standards.
  - A list and timeframe for completion on any outstanding non-essential repairs has been provided.
  - Electrical systems have been checked and all necessary repairs and up-grading completed.
  - Sanitary services have been checked and are in full working order.
  - Central heating has been checked and is in full working order and the boiler has been fully serviced.
  - The chimney(s) have been swept and smoke-tested.
- ◆ Performance in re-let management should be monitored separately from the general repairs operation and against the objectives of the Re-Let Management Plan.

## RE-LETS MAINTENANCE PLANS – CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS

### POLICY ON RE-LETTING OF DWELLINGS

- ◆ Policy and procedures for dealing with the projected number of re-lets including a classification of re-lets by scope of work and related turn-around times ✓
- ◆ Guidelines on the essential pre-let repairs which must be carried out before re-letting of all dwellings and the non-essential repairs which can be carried out within a specified timeframe after the dwelling has been re-let ✓
- ◆ Policy on the up-grading of dwellings at the time of re-letting ✓
- ◆ Clear policy and procedures on handling abandoned property and abandoned furniture in empty dwellings ✓
- ◆ Clear policy and procedure for security protection and on the engagement of 24-hour security and/or security patrolling of empty properties ✓

### STAFFING AND RESOURCING OF THE RE-LETS MAINTENANCE SERVICE

- ◆ Resource provision covering requirement of direct labour organisation staff and/or contractors dedicated to achieving the policy and turn-around objectives of the plan ✓
- ◆ A fixed-term contract (with one or more contractors) with schedules of rates for the main re-let repair items ✓
- ◆ When DLO staff are involved, negotiate maximum flexibility in working arrangements to secure earliest void turn-around and provide necessary training on same. ✓

### RE-LETS COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE

- ◆ Details of re-lets compliance procedure.

### TENANT PARTICIPATION IN THE RE-LETTING OF DWELLINGS

- ◆ Policy on tenant's obligation to carry out appropriate repair and re-decoration of the dwelling prior to transfer to alternative accommodation ✓
- ◆ Liaison procedures with adjoining residents on nature, scope and timing of re-let repairs ✓
- ◆ Advance letting procedures for early involvement of incoming tenant including maximum choice in finishes, fittings and colour ✓

### RE-LET MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- ◆ Procedures for performance monitoring ✓

**Best Practice Suggestion No. 5:**  
Developing Fire and Storm  
Damage Maintenance System

In order to achieve best practice in preventive maintenance, local authorities should consider developing a fire and storm damage maintenance system which includes the following provisions:

- ◆ A comprehensive insurance policy to cover damage to the housing stock which is received every two to three years and procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and the service provided by the loss adjuster in the key areas of ease and speed of claims assessment, processing and payments
- ◆ Procedures to assess and review causes of all fire and storm damage and provide technical feedback to design staff responsible for all new build and damage restoration work. Fires in the home in particular require constant cause analysis and where appropriate should involve reminders to tenants of any improvements required in good house-keeping regimes
- ◆ A competent, well-trained and experienced professional and technical inspectorate in place to assess extent of all damage and to negotiate with loss adjuster on the content and extent of claim and to supervise execution of works
- ◆ Procedures to ensure that all fire/storm damage is inspected as early as possible after the event, that temporary making safe, boarding up and security arrangements are in place, and that there is early agreement on the scope of works and restoration specification with loss adjuster
- ◆ Procedures to encourage tenants to take out their own contents insurance by defining the limits of landlord insurance and by securing discounts from reputable insurance companies
- ◆ In the case of landlords with a very large housing stock, it is advisable to have dedicated direct labour squads and/or fixed-term contractors in place with agreed schedules of rates on the main elements of restoration work. Local authorities should endeavour to adhere to the following guidelines in the management of systems of this type:

- Use only the agreed RIAI/GDLA forms of contract, and avoid using in-house goods and services procedures or *ad hoc* contracts for fire damage/storm damage restoration contracts.
- Ensure that restoration work is carried out as effectively as possible within prescribed cost and time frame.
- Ensure that restoration work in occupied dwelling is carried out with minimum disruption to the tenant. This work should be executed under a strict health and safety regime, with work areas isolated from family use and with children under constant parental supervision and/or removed from house under repair.
- Ensure that experienced architects, engineers and quantity surveyors are used in this type of work and that recoupment of all professional fees are allowed for and claimed under the fire and storm damage insurance policy.
- Ensure that at all times tenants are made aware of the scope of works to be carried out, the time frame involved, the extent of any disruption of key services and any alternative arrangements for the provision of same.
- Ensure payment in full of all accepted claims and monitor the payment process.

**Best Practice Suggestion No. 6:**  
Developing Disabled Tenants'  
Adaptations Plan

In order to achieve best practice in the preventive maintenance service local authorities should consider developing systems to manage the adaptation of dwellings for disabled tenants. These systems should include the following provisions:

- ◆ Ensure that a detailed design brief is available for alterations and inspections and that it is in compliance with agreed medical, occupational therapist and health board advice.
- ◆ Hold design brief conferences with medical, health board, housing management and design staff to secure high quality brief development and to explore all procurement options.
- ◆ Ensure that the tenant understands and agrees with the design brief and the nature and scope of works involved.
- ◆ Have competent supervision systems for direct labour and/or contractor staff in place, to ensure that works are carried out efficiently, within cost and timeframe and with minimum disruption to tenant.
- ◆ Ensure that all work areas in occupied dwellings are isolated from family use and that children are under constant parental supervision and/or removed from dwelling when work is being carried out.
- ◆ Ensure that tenants are made aware of the full scope of works, the timeframe involved, the extent of any disruption of key services and any alternative arrangements for the provision of same.
- ◆ Have agreed cost recoupment procedures with health board and present final account in sufficient detail to facilitate recoupment process.

### 3.5 MULTI-LEVEL MAINTENANCE PLANNING

Local authorities which have already put a preventive maintenance programme in place should develop a multi-level maintenance plan which integrates the management of short-term response maintenance with the preventive maintenance which is carried out over the medium and longer term.

#### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 7:**

Developing Multi-level  
Maintenance Plans

- ◆ In order to achieve maximum efficiency in the management of their maintenance service local authorities should establish an integrated framework of long-term, medium- and short-term maintenance planning.
- ◆ This multi-level plan should also include a long-term plan to manage the preventive maintenance service over the next five to seven years and would achieve the following objectives:
  - Project total expenditure over life of plan
  - Avoid major fluctuations in workload
  - Set optimum times for major improvements
  - Allow for preventive recruitment and training programmes
  - Identify the main contract maintenance requirements
  - Allow for preventive integration of major capital works with the preventive maintenance programme
  - Provide a ready-made framework for maintenance policy development
  - Provide a structure to facilitate tenant participation in the maintenance process.
- ◆ The multi-level maintenance plan should also address the management of the preventive maintenance service over the medium term – the next one to two years. This element of the plan would seek to achieve the following:
  - Provide an accurately costed two-year forward plan for the preventive maintenance service
  - Identify annual workload estimates for response maintenance based on analysis of previous annual records

- Ensure that there is an efficient system for dealing with emergency and urgent response repairs and that the majority of routine items are directed into the medium-term and long-term programmes
  - Identify the sections of the preventive works programme which will be carried out over the next two years
  - Identify any one-off special works which should be included in the annual estimates, which make up the two-year forward plan. The content of this programme should be determined by inspections, user requests, changes in policy and technical standards, for inclusion in the annual estimates, which make up the two-year forward plan
  - Establish a firm budgetary control framework within each of the annual estimates in the forward plan
  - Identify accurate estimates of contract work and related professional/technical resource provision as well as programming dates for contract documentation, tender and job start/completion dates
  - Identify accurate estimates for recruitment, supervision, materials and equipment, transport and general overheads for the use of the direct labour workforce.
- ◆ Finally, the multi-level maintenance plan should include short-term plans to manage the response maintenance service on a quarterly, monthly, and weekly basis. This short-term plan would seek to achieve the following:
- Maximise the co-ordination of available finance, staff, equipment and materials on a daily, weekly and monthly basis
  - Ensure, through local weekly and monthly reviews, the achievement of target completion times for emergency, urgent and routine items of response maintenance
  - Establish a system of weekly and monthly reviews for the completion of all mandatory inspections and servicing and general cycle works under the preventive maintenance programme.



**Best Practice Suggestion No. 8:**

Interaction of  
Planning Levels

- ◆ Maintenance Practitioners should strive to achieve a positive interaction between long term, medium term and short term management planning under which
  - The decision-makers at each level understand their role and function
  - The long term plan is recognised as the key forward planning activity
  - The medium term plan is recognised as the corporate planning vehicle for budgetary control and performance analysis
  - The short term plan is recognised as the responsibility of local maintenance managers involved with day to day job scheduling and job planning.

### 3.6 **PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The establishment of a system of performance indicators is a vital element of achieving good practice in the management of the response maintenance service. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring of preventive maintenance housing, practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 24:**

##### Preventive Maintenance Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the preventive maintenance service, local authorities should compare the level of expenditure on preventive maintenance and response maintenance on an annual basis. Good practice dictates that approximately 65 per cent of the total budget should be devoted to preventive maintenance.
- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that ongoing preventive maintenance expenditure is formally reviewed at least annually.
- ◆ Local authorities should set annual targets for the number of building inspections and preventive maintenance works which they aim to carry out each year, and review the achievement of these targets on an annual basis.

**Best Practice Suggestion No. 9:**Preventive Maintenance  
Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the management of the preventive maintenance service, local authorities should consider developing a comprehensive system of performance indicators which could include the following areas:
  - Number of mandatory inspections completed in the previous year by inspection type, by inspection frequency, and as a percentage of target programmes
  - Number of dwellings in which preventive maintenance repairs have been completed in the previous year, by type of repair, by the direct labour organisation, or by contractors, and as a percentage of annual targets
  - Number of essential servicing works completed in the year by type and as a percentage of target programmes, e.g. number of gas boilers in which mandatory annual service has been completed
  - Percentage of jobs completed within target completion times by the direct labour organisation or by contractors
  - Average cost of jobs by type, and by the direct labour organisation or by contractors
  - Number of tenant complaints about work carried out by the direct labour organisation or by contractor and the nature of and reason for these complaints.

The Introduction to these guidelines mentioned the fact that the housing legislation confers a responsibility on local authority tenants to maintain certain aspects of their homes. This division of maintenance responsibilities between the local authority and tenants implies that tenants are not only customers of the repairs and maintenance service, they are partners in its provision and, therefore, they have a vital role to play in improving its effectiveness.

In order to achieve good practice in the repair and maintenance of dwellings, individual tenants should be clearly informed of their responsibilities for the maintenance aspects of their dwelling, and they should be actively encouraged and facilitated to play a more active role in the maintenance of their home if they so wish. They also have a right to provide feedback or to make complaints about the quality of the response maintenance service and to be consulted on decisions regarding the preventive maintenance programme.

Feedback from tenants' and residents' associations in local authority estates can also be a useful aid to improving the quality of the repairs and maintenance service. Furthermore, these organisations have made a significant contribution to improving the quality of the built environment and of public space in many estates around the country through the medium of estate management projects. Therefore, tenants' and residents' associations should also be facilitated to play an active role in the repairs and maintenance service.

#### 4.1 **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE INFORMATION FOR TENANTS**

## TENANT AND CUSTOMER RELATIONS

The provision of clear information on the maintenance responsibilities of tenants is the first key step to ensuring that tenants fulfil their responsibilities in regard to the maintenance of their home and that the local authority is not over-burdened with requests for repairs which are outside its remit.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 25:**

#### Repairs and Maintenance Guides for Tenants

- ◆ All tenants should be issued with guides to the local authority maintenance policy either as part of a tenants' handbook or as part of a separate repairs and maintenance handbook or leaflet.
- ◆ All maintenance information for tenants should be published in a clear, attractive, easily understood and updateable format.
- ◆ The maintenance information should include a clear outline of the landlord's maintenance policy and procedures and an explicit breakdown of the division of repair responsibility between landlord and tenant.
- ◆ Each tenant should be given a clear guide to the operation of the maintenance service at both local and central level, including an explanation of the emergency, urgent and routine items of response repairs and of the target completion times for the execution of the work.

- ◆ The suggested content of maintenance guides for tenants is outlined on the opposite page.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 26:**

## Clarifying Maintenance Procedures to New Tenants

- ◆ Information on the local authority maintenance policy and maintenance procedures should be provided to all new tenants on the letting of a dwelling. These policies and procedures should be clearly explained by an official of the authority and tenants should be provided with an opportunity to ask any questions they wish.
- ◆ Those authorities which provide pre-tenancy training or information sessions for new tenants should ensure that the maintenance guides are clearly explained at these sessions.

## 4.2 **INFORMATION FOR TENANTS ON PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

The importance of the preventive maintenance programme to the preservation of the housing stock has been stressed repeatedly throughout these guidelines. However, it is also important to recognise that preventive maintenance works can be a major inconvenience to tenants. Good practice requires that any disturbance to tenants as a result of the preventive maintenance programme should be minimised through the provision of detailed information on the operation and the scope of these works and that, as far as possible, tenants should be consulted on decisions regarding the programme.

**MAINTENANCE GUIDES  
TO TENANTS –**

**CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS**

**MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORD AND TENANT**

- ◆ Maintenance responsibilities of the local authority ✓
- ◆ Maintenance responsibilities of tenants ✓
- ◆ Examples of the types of responsibilities which fall into each of these two categories ✓
- ◆ Details of any exceptions which the local authority is prepared to make to this division of responsibilities ✓

**REPAIRS CARRIED OUT BY THE TENANT**

- ◆ How to deal with commonly-occurring minor defects which are the responsibility of the tenant ✓
- ◆ Local authority policy on improvement works carried out by tenants ✓

**REQUESTING REPAIRS**

- ◆ How to request a repair ✓
- ◆ Details of the location, telephone numbers and opening hours of the repairs and maintenance department or local repairs depot ✓
- ◆ How repairs will be classified in terms of priority ✓
- ◆ Expected response time for each category of repair ✓
- ◆ Normal access/appointment procedures for maintenance staff ✓
- ◆ Tenants' responsibility to provide reasonable access to the dwelling ✓

**EMERGENCY REPAIRS**

- ◆ How to identify an emergency repair ✓
- ◆ What to do in an emergency situation ✓
- ◆ What to do if an emergency occurs outside normal working hours ✓

**PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE**

- ◆ Information on preventive maintenance programmes ✓
- ◆ Responsibility of tenants to co-operate with these works ✓

**CUSTOMER CARE**

- ◆ Procedures for identifying maintenance workforce and contractors ✓
- ◆ Workforce and contractor codes of conduct ✓
- ◆ Arrangements for obtaining tenant feedback on the repairs service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for making a complaint about the repairs service ✓
- ◆ Procedures for dealing with these complaints ✓

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 27:**

Information for Tenants on Preventive Maintenance:

- ◆ In the case of major preventive maintenance programmes, local authorities should ensure that all tenants are provided with the following information:
  - Adequate notices of intended works especially where significant disruption is anticipated
  - Identification of who will carry out the work and the procedures for the supervision of these staff or contractors
  - Details of work to be carried out and projected starting and finishing dates
  - Details of any disruption of main services as a result of preventive maintenance work and of any alternative arrangements for the provision of main services during this time
  - Details of the procedures for reporting any complaints about preventive maintenance works and for compensation of tenants or for making good any damage caused.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 28:**

Consultation with Tenants Regarding Preventive Maintenance

- ◆ In the case of all major preventive maintenance programmes tenants should be given an opportunity to influence details of the programme including maximum choice in finishes, colours and materials involved.

### 4.3 ENCOURAGING REPAIR-ACTIVE TENANTS

As well as ensuring that tenants fulfil their basic statutory obligations in regard to the maintenance of their homes, in order to achieve best practice in housing management local authorities should also try to encourage and facilitate tenants to play a more active role in the maintenance of their home.

#### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 10:** Home Users' Manual

- ◆ Consideration should be given to providing each household with a simple house book illustrating:
  - A plan of the home showing room sizes and designed furniture layout
  - Location of main services controls, stopcocks, hot/cold water cut off, central heating controls, meter cupboards and smoke alarms
  - Simple home protection measures, for example turning off/on water, electricity and central heating in case of emergencies
  - Simple information on tenant repairs and instructions on fitting household appliances – washing machines, cookers/cooker extract, etc
  - Energy-saving measures and ventilation control
  - Attic access and service routes
  - Basic 'Safety in the Home' information
  - Explanation in simple terms of the building terminology related to the main elements of the house.

#### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 11:** Making the Most of Your Home

- ◆ Consideration should also be given to providing a series of maintenance information leaflets, which would provide the following:
  - Policy information and guidelines for repair-active tenants and for tenants wishing to undertake minor alterations and improvements to their home
  - Policy and technical guidelines in relation to major alterations and extensions including a 'can do and can't do' summary
  - Information and advice on basic house maintenance and garden care
  - Basic advice on getting work done by trades people and contractors.

#### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 12:** Facilitating Tenant Participation in Housing Maintenance

- ◆ Local authorities should consider providing training for repair-active tenants in basic home maintenance and garden care.



#### 4.4 FACILITATING TENANT PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING MAINTENANCE

As mentioned above, tenants' and residents' associations can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the repairs and maintenance service. Therefore these organisations should be facilitated and encouraged to play an active role in the service whenever possible.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 29:**

Consultation with Tenants' and Residents' Associations  
Regarding the Maintenance Service

- ◆ Local authorities should establish mechanisms for surveying the views of members of tenants' and residents' associations and estate management committees in local authorities on the effectiveness of the repairs and maintenance service.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 30:**

Facilitating the Participation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations  
in the Repairs and Maintenance Service

- ◆ Local authorities should actively encourage tenants' and residents' associations to contribute to the general maintenance of their estate, by means of projects such as clean-up campaigns and grass cutting, as is suggested in the First Report of the Housing Management Group.
- ◆ Responsibility for the promotion of tenant participation in the repairs and maintenance service would normally fall within the remit of estate management and tenant liaison staff. However, local authorities which do not employ staff of this type should ensure that they designate another official with responsibility for this issue.
- ◆ Local authorities should establish mechanisms to defray the costs of tenants' and residents' associations who wish to play a role in the maintenance of their estates through the provision of materials and tools and through the establishment of a grants scheme to refund expenditure of this type.

## 4.5 DEVELOPING A CUSTOMER CARE CODE

As was pointed out earlier in these guidelines, both tenants and local authorities have a range of responsibilities in relation to the maintenance of the housing stock. In order to fulfil their statutory maintenance obligations as effectively as possible, local authorities should develop customer care codes to ensure that maintenance work is carried out to the highest standard.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 31:**

#### Developing a Customer Care Code

- ◆ Local authorities should develop a customer care code for their repairs and maintenance service.
- ◆ The starting point for the development of this code is the establishment of procedures for surveying the satisfaction of tenants who avail of the repairs and maintenance service.
- ◆ The code should also emphasise the responsibilities of both the local authority and tenants in relation to housing maintenance and the need for courtesy and respect between the tenant and the maintenance operative and/or contractor who is carrying out the work.
- ◆ The details of the customer care code should be determined by each local authority on the basis of consultation with both tenants and staff. However, a checklist of the contents of a customer care code is also provided below.
- ◆ Local authorities should make compliance with the code an essential part of the conditions of contract for engagement of external contractors and the agreed basis for all work delivered by other local authority sections or departments.
- ◆ Local authorities should present the customer care code in simple format, published in an attractive manner, and make it available to all tenants.

**CUSTOMER CARE CODE****CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS****BEHAVIOUR OF MAINTENANCE STAFF AND CONTRACTORS**

- ◆ Introduce and identify themselves to the tenant's satisfaction ✓
- ◆ Explain the nature, purpose and extent of the work including the projected completion times ✓
- ◆ Be courteous and patient at all times ✓
- ◆ Wear the designated uniform and be otherwise tidily dressed ✓
- ◆ Protect tenant's home and property from damage ✓
- ◆ Respect and honour the tenant's household security at all times ✓
- ◆ Behave in a proper and professional manner at all times and refrain from smoking, bad language, playing radios and over-familiar behaviour ✓

**SAFE WORK POLICY FOR MAINTENANCE STAFF AND CONTRACTORS:**

- ◆ Take due care of all materials and equipment on site ✓
- ◆ Cordon off, in agreement with tenant, those sections of the house where work is being carried out ✓
- ◆ Never work in an occupied room or area ✓
- ◆ Clear and bag small items of rubbish as work proceeds and remove from property at the end of each working day ✓
- ◆ Remove large items of rubbish and building materials from the garden and environs of the house to a safe storage area, and remove it off-site at the end of each working day ✓
- ◆ Remove all tools and equipment at the end of each working day ✓
- ◆ Where major repairs are being undertaken, maintenance supervisors should explain to the tenant the schedule of works to be undertaken and agree the timing, sequence and procedures for these works with the tenant ✓

**TENANT SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS**

- ◆ The customer care code should include details of a formal complaints procedure for tenants who are dissatisfied with the standard of maintenance work ✓
- ◆ All complaints should be investigated promptly and details of expected response times to complaints should be included in the customer care code ✓
- ◆ Local authorities should establish a prompt method of compensating tenants for any real loss or damage experienced during repairs ✓
- ◆ Local authorities should establish procedures for accessing feedback from tenants on the performance of the repaired components ✓

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF TENANTS**

- ◆ Respect the maintenance worker and show due courtesy ✓
- ◆ Complain to the supervisor if they are not satisfied with the work ✓
- ◆ Grant reasonable access to the dwelling ✓
- ◆ Vacate the part of the dwelling where work is being carried out ✓
- ◆ Ensure that children are not left alone in the house during repair work and that they are removed from the house or supervised constantly during work ✓

## 4.6 TENANT PARTICIPANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In order to achieve best practice in tenant participation in the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should establish a system of performance indicators to measure their performance in this element of the maintenance service. The exact indicators chosen are a matter for each authority. However, in order to aid the development of their policy on performance monitoring of tenant participation in the maintenance service, housing practitioners may wish to consult the recommendations and suggestions outlined below.

### Best Practice Suggestion No. 13:

Tenant Participation  
Performance Indicators

- ◆ In order to achieve best practice in the management of tenant participation in the maintenance service, local authorities should develop a comprehensive system of performance indicators which should include the following areas:
  - Percentage of completed jobs which were included in tenant satisfaction surveys
  - Percentage of satisfied tenants in regard to (a) speed of the service, (b) standard of repairs, (c) workforce/contractor performance
  - Number of complaints as percentage of all jobs carried out (a) by reason of the complaint and (b) by the direct labour organisation or by contractors
  - Number of meetings with tenants on maintenance policy and operation and percentage of tenants involved who found process (a) informative, (b) worthwhile or (c) unsatisfactory
  - Number of freedom of information requests on maintenance issues
  - Number of legal actions on maintenance issues.



## SECTION FIVE

The housing maintenance staff are among the main determinants of the quality of the maintenance service which is delivered to tenants by local authorities. Therefore, the effective management of staff resources is vital if the local authorities are to achieve good practice in the repairs and maintenance service. However, the management of maintenance staff poses particular challenges, since this service is generally provided by a variety of administrative, professional and technical staff; it is often provided by several different sections within local authorities, and elements of its delivery may be contracted out to private sector agencies.

In order to achieve good practice in the management of the maintenance and repair workforce, local authorities need to adopt a strategic approach to personnel management and development. This approach should be based on the development of a policy which ensures that suitable staff and contractors are recruited to the service; that they are provided with the training necessary to carry out their job and keep abreast of the fast pace of change in public housing management and building, and that the maintenance service is managed in an integrated fashion. Housing maintenance staff can also provide useful opinions on the operation of the maintenance service and they should be encouraged and facilitated to play a role in decision-making regarding the management of the service.

## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The *First Report* of the Housing Management Group raises a number of concerns regarding personnel management within local authorities and includes a number of suggestions for improving practice in this area. The report identifies the establishment of effective arrangements for the training and development of local authority staff as a vital prerequisite to achieving good practice in housing management, for example, and it argues that such training should focus on housing management policy and the skills necessary to provide a better service, including the development and improvement of interpersonal skills related to customer care.

The report also identifies the dispersal of the different functions which go to make up public housing service across different sections within local authorities as one of the main factors which impede good practice in public housing management. The lack of service co-ordination which is caused by this dispersal of functions can be particularly obvious in the repairs and maintenance service, as this service is often provided by several different sections of the local authority. Furthermore, the fact that the maintenance service is delivered mainly by professional and technical staff can sometimes mean that it is poorly co-ordinated with the other public housing management functions which are usually carried out by administrative staff.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 32:**

## Developing an Integrated Maintenance Service

- ◆ It is advisable that the Housing Department is charged with the development of an integrated team approach to maintenance service delivery in which the need to co-ordinate the housing manager role, the technical advisor role and the contractor role within an overall maintenance management framework is recognised as a key housing management responsibility.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 33:**

## Personnel Management and Development Policy

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should develop and implement a policy on the management and development of the staff of this service.
- ◆ In order to strategically manage recruitment of new staff, this policy should address the skills and competencies which are expected from the different staff of the service.
- ◆ The policy should also include details of training plans which should seek to update and develop the skills of all grades of staff and facilitate the advancement of repairs and maintenance staff up the promotional ladder.
- ◆ In the interests of ensuring that a comprehensive repairs and maintenance service is delivered to tenants, the personnel management and development policy should seek to promote an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to the delivery of the repairs and maintenance service.
- ◆ In the interests of delivering a comprehensive housing service to tenants, the personnel management and development policy should seek to encourage and facilitate staff interaction and co-ordination with the other sections of the authority's housing service.

- ◆ In order to achieve partnership in the management of the repairs and maintenance service, the personnel management and development policy should include details of the authority's arrangement for staff participation in policy development.
- ◆ The policy should outline the authority's disciplinary policy as well as any staff welfare or support service which it may provide.
- ◆ The details of the personnel management and development policy should be determined by each local authority on the basis of consultation with staff and a consideration of the strategic requirements of its repairs and maintenance service. However, in order to aid the development of their policy, local authorities may wish to consult the checklist of items for inclusion in this statement which is provided on the following page.



## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

### CHECKLIST OF CONTENTS

#### STAFF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

- ◆ Details of the skills and competencies which are expected from the main grades of staff who are employed by the repairs and maintenance service ✓

#### STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- ◆ Information programmes on developments in housing policy or building technology ✓
- ◆ Skills up-dating programmes ✓
- ◆ Inter-disciplinary workshops and seminars, including joint training with staff of other sections of the housing service ✓

#### STAFF MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

- ◆ Details of the procedures for the management and supervision of staff, including the 'line of command' in the maintenance service ✓
- ◆ Details of the authority's procedures for dealing with staff grievances and complaints ✓
- ◆ Disciplinary procedures covering the following areas:
  - absenteeism ✓
  - poor performance ✓
  - breaches of the customer care code ✓
  - breaches of health and safety policy ✓

#### STAFF INFORMATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- ◆ Policy on the provision of information to staff on developments in housing policy or building technology ✓
- ◆ Procedures for consulting staff on the development and reform of repairs and maintenance policy and procedures ✓

#### STAFF WELFARE

- ◆ Staff welfare policy and services ✓
- ◆ Details of the authority's health and safety policy ✓

## 5.2 INFORMATION FOR REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE STAFF

Section Four of these guidelines discussed the need to provide information to tenants on the division of maintenance responsibilities between landlords and tenants in order to ensure that they fulfil their obligations in this regard. If reform of the repairs and maintenance service is to be effectively implemented it is also vital that procedures are put in place to clearly communicate the details of the authority's policy to staff who deliver the service on a day-to-day basis.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 34:**

Resource Packs for Repairs and Maintenance Staff

- ◆ Local authorities should provide resource packs for all staff of the repairs and maintenance section.
- ◆ The content of these resource packs is a matter for individual authorities. However, in order to achieve good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service they should contain the following information:
  - The authority's statement of policy on response maintenance including a clear statement of its job-scheduling policy and its target response times
  - The authority's preventive maintenance programme
  - The content of the repairs and maintenance guides which the authority issues to tenants
  - The authority's customer care code
  - The authority's personnel management and development policy
  - Details of procedures for monitoring the performance of all aspects of the repairs and maintenance service.

### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 14:** Work Practice Sheets for Housing Maintenance Staff

In order to achieve best practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service local authorities could consider developing comprehensive work practice sheets on the most common repair jobs. These work practice sheets should specify the standard of workmanship expected and materials which should be used in the job. In developing work practice sheets, however, it is important to ensure that all specifications for workmanship and materials comply with relevant Irish and European standards and with the industry codes of practice

### 5.3 **STAFF PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

No one has a more intimate knowledge of the operation, and especially of the inefficiencies, of the repairs and maintenance service than the staff who provide the service. Achieving good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service requires that staff are consulted about any proposed reforms to the service and are afforded an opportunity to influence these reforms and play a role in the development of the authority.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 35:**

##### Developing Partnership Arrangements with Staff

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should develop an active internal partnership with staff which ensures that staff of all grades are afforded a full opportunity to influence policy formation and operational strategy and are consulted regarding all changes in policy or operational matters.
- ◆ Consultation with staff can make a particular contribution to policy development in the following areas: the categorisation and setting of response time to repair requests; the development and implementation of a preventive repair programme; the formulation of health and safety policy; the formulation of customer care codes; the development of training programmes; the identification of performance indicators.
- ◆ Staff should be kept informed about the results of performance monitoring and be given an opportunity to play a role in planning to address any inefficiencies identified by performance monitoring.
- ◆ Local authorities should also establish procedures to survey staff satisfaction on a regular basis.

## 5.4 STAFF AND CONTRACTOR SKILLS PROFILE

In order to improve the management of the repairs and maintenance section, it is vital that staff with adequate skills are recruited to the service. Although decisions concerning the recruitment of staff are an issue for local authorities, this section profiles the skills that are required from local authority repairs and maintenance management staff and from contractors if good practice is to be achieved in the repairs and maintenance service.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 36:**

#### Response Maintenance Supervisor Skills Profile

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in response maintenance, local authorities should ensure that this section is staffed by highly competent, experienced technical supervisors and inspection staff with full understanding of maintenance policy and procedures and with particular knowledge and expertise on the following:
  - Defect diagnosis and remedial technologies
  - Job scheduling and programming
  - Manpower management
  - Materials handling
  - Contract procedures and administration
  - Health and safety
  - Construction project management.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 37:**

## Repairs and Maintenance Management Skills

In order to achieve good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should ensure that they employ adequate numbers of competent, qualified maintenance architects/engineers, quantity surveyors and clerk of works, and that these staff have full training and expertise in building construction, defects diagnosis and remedial works identification and specification.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION NO. 38:**

## Establishing Contractor Panels

- ◆ Good practice in housing management requires that local authorities should develop regular selection procedures to establish an approved panel of contractors from which quotes are sought as required for main maintenance work.
- ◆ Selection for inclusion in this panel should be based on the following criteria:
  - Construction management structures and experience
  - Site supervision structures and experience
  - Past performance, quality of work and technical competence
  - Staffing levels at, and quality of, contractor's base
  - Levels of labour, equipment and plant
  - Financial soundness and insurance status
  - Statutory compliance with health and safety, social welfare/pension funding and tax clearance
  - Acceptance of the authority's customer care code.

- ◆ Contractors should be invited to tender on a two- or three-year basis for fixed-term contracts based on a comprehensive schedule of rates for recurring work items in main house types. The areas of work which could be carried out by contractors include the following:
  - Electrical repairs including re-wires
  - Central heating/boiler servicing and repairs
  - General plumbing repair
  - Security and boarding-up services
  - 24-hour emergency repair service.
- ◆ The tendering process should utilise high quality tender documentation which is based on pre-measurement of all repair items and a clear specification covering the quality of all workmanship and materials, in order to enable the definition of a fixed schedule of work on which the final tender sum is based.
- ◆ In the interests of achieving value for money in the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should avoid using 'time and materials' basis for costing maintenance work, and only use day rates in cases where the extent of the work required is impossible to determine in advance or where it is unfeasible to negotiate rates based on established costs or rates for similar work. Housing practitioners should also ensure that when day works rates are used the rate per day is agreed in advance of commencement of the work.
- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that they have clear formal procedures for seeking tenders or quotations from contractors with well-defined policy and regulations in relation to the financial limits within which restricted tendering/quotations may be sought and above which open tendering must take place.

- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that they have clear, formal procedures for receiving, opening, reporting and accepting tenders and that the confidentiality of tenders is protected at all times.

**GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 39:**

Contract Management

- ◆ Local authorities should ensure that only RIAI or GDLA forms of contract are used for all contract work and that the authority and the contractor are fully aware of their obligations and responsibilities under the contract. Authorities should not use local goods and services procedures or *ad hoc* in-house contracts as a substitute for these standard forms.
- ◆ Maintenance and repair contracts should include formal procedures which achieve the following objectives:
  - Ensure that the contractor complies with all legislative requirements relating to issue such as health and safety, insurance indemnity, etc
  - Ensure proper and prompt interim payments, retention of defect liability moieties and final account settlement
  - Clarify procedures relating to the issuing of architect instructions and variations on the contract
  - Clarify procedures for the rejection of unsatisfactory work and remedial action
  - Establish procedures for acceptance or rejection of extensions of time claims
  - Establish procedures for the termination of the contract by contractor or the authority
  - Establish clear procedures for contract management and site supervision by competent, experienced, technical staff.

## 5.5 STAFF AND CONTRACTOR SKILLS PROFILE

The First Report of the Housing Management Group identifies the provision of training for staff as a vital pre-requisite to achieving good practice in public housing management.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 40:**

#### Staff Training and Programmes

- ◆ In order to achieve good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should develop and implement a training programme for the staff of the service. Although the details of this programme will depend on local circumstances, as a minimum it should address the following issues:
  - all aspects of the authority’s maintenance policy
  - basic building technology in relation to dealing with repair requests
  - customer care
  - interpersonal skills
  - health and safety procedures including personal health issues such as stress management skills.

### **GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATION No. 41:**

#### Staff Development Programme

- ◆ Local authorities should also put in place a programme to develop the skills of repairs and maintenance staff. This could involve the provision of a regular series of skills up-dating and enhancement courses, including late apprenticeships for interested staff.



**Best Practice Suggestion No. 15:**Interdisciplinary and  
Interdepartmental Staff  
Training

- ◆ In order to facilitate the development of an integrated team approach to the staffing of the repairs and maintenance service, local authorities should ensure that training courses include a range of disciplines, trades and grades of maintenance staff.
  
- ◆ In order to encourage interaction between the housing maintenance staff and the staff of the other aspects of the housing service, local authorities should consider including staff from a range of sections within the same training programme, where relevant. Suitable topics for training of this type would include:
  - freedom of information
  - equal opportunities
  - housing policy.

## 5.6 PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In order to achieve best practice in repairs and maintenance, local authorities may wish to implement a programme to measure the performance of their personnel management and development programme for this service.

### **Best Practice Suggestion No. 16:** Personnel Management and Development Performance Indicators

Indicators of the authority's performance in the area of personnel management and development could include the following issues:

- Percentage of maintenance workforce in the year involved in health and safety, skills upgrading and personal development training
- Percentage of staff and workforce involved in integrated training
- Number and percentage of hours lost among housing staff and maintenance workforce by work depot, section, or location and by
  - (a) casual sick leave
  - (b) certified sick leave
  - (c) industrial injury
  - (d) special leave
- Number of staff satisfaction surveys carried out on policy and service delivery
- Number and percentage of staff expressing
  - (a) satisfaction with service
  - (b) need to change aspects of service
  - (c) need to overhaul entire service.



## FURTHER READINGS AND USEFUL CONTACTS

### **6.1 HOUSING MAINTENANCE LEGISLATION**

This section summarises the main provision of the legislation on the maintenance of public housing and of other legislation which is relevant to good practice in the management of the repairs and maintenance service. It also lists some further readings and contact details of organisations.

The Housing Act, 1966. Section 58(1) states that 'the management and control of any dwelling, building or land of which a Housing Authority is the owner and of any work or services provided by that Authority under this Act, shall be vested in any exercised by the Authority'. However, this responsibility is subject to certain provisions, in particular to regulations made by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government.

In the Housing Regulations 1980, the Minister sets out certain conditions attaching to the letting of dwellings by local authorities. Article 83(1)(m) of the Regulations states: 'the tenant shall be responsible for all internal decoration and any breakage of glass in the windows and any damming to the fixtures and fillings of the house and for the proper maintenance of the garden or plot and shall cause to be made good any damage or breakage without delay and, where such damage or breakage is made good by the authority, shall pay the cost to the authority'. The Regulations also require tenants to keep their dwellings in a fit and proper state and prohibit them from causing any damage to the house, allowing refuse or any other offensive matter to accumulate, and carrying out any additions, alterations, improvements or any works to the house without the permission of the authority.

The 1979 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act requires local authorities to carry out all necessary works to put dwellings in sound structural condition before they are sold under the tenant purchase scheme.

1992 Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act – empowers the Department of the Environment and Local Government to set the minimum standards to which local authority accommodation should be maintained. These standards are set out in the Housing (Standards for Rented Dwellings) Regulations, 1993 which were applied to local authorities on 1 January 1998. The 1992 Housing Act also allows local authorities to delegate aspects of their housing management function, including repair and maintenance of dwellings to a designated body and requires authorities to develop a statement of policy on housing management. The Department of the Environment and Local Government *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Statement of Policy on Housing Management* specifies that the management of the repairs and maintenance service should be a central part of these statements.

1989 Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act – details the rights and responsibilities of employers and employees in relation to workplace safety; requires all employers to draw up a safety statement which specifies the manner in which the safety, health and welfare of employees will be secured in the workplace and also establishes protections for the general public in relation to workplace activities.

## **6.2 HOUSING MAINTENANCE PUBLICATIONS**

### **DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS**

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1993),  
*Standard Building Elements and Design Cost Control Procedures*,  
3rd ed., Dublin, Department of the Environment.

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1995),  
*Local Authorities and Sustainable Development: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21*, Dublin,  
Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1997),  
*Technical Guidance Documents on the National Building Regulations 1997*,  
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1997),  
*Value for Money Study no 13: Housing Maintenance*,  
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1999),  
*Social Housing Guidelines: Design Guidelines*,  
Dublin Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Department of the Environment and Local Government (1999),  
*Guidelines: Remedial Works Scheme for Local Authority Housing*,  
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Housing Management Group (1996),  
*First Report*,  
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Housing Management Group (1998),  
*Second Report*,  
Dublin, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY PUBLICATIONS.**

*Build in Safety - A short guide to good practice and legislation*

*Bullying at Work*

*Construction Safety Partnership Plan - 2000-2002*

*Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989, and (General Application) Regulations, 1993*

*Guidelines for Clients Involved in Construction Projects*

*Guidelines on Preparing Your Safety Statements and Carrying Out Risk Assessments*

*Manual Handling in the Construction Industry - Training Pack*

*Short Guide to Health and Safety Law*

*Stay Safe on Site*

*The HSA and You*

*Workplace Health and Safety Management*

**IRISH ENERGY CENTRE PUBLICATIONS**

*Be Your Own Energy Manager*

*Condensation (Insulation)*

*Domestic Hot Water (Heating)*

*Fuels and Heating Costs*

*Gas in the Home*

*Guide to Household Insulation*

*Guide to Insulating your Home*

*Healthy Homes and Ventilation (Heating)*

*Heating Controls (Heating)*

*Heating Systems (Heating)*

*Lighting (Fuels)*

*Planning and Building an Energy Efficient Home (Energy Management)*

*Purchasing an Older House (Energy Management)*

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## 6.3

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### **Department of the Environment and Local Government**

Custom House  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01-8882000  
Fax: 01-8882888  
Website: [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

#### **Health and Safety Authority**

10 Hogan Place  
Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 6147000  
Fax: (01) 6147020  
Website: [www.has.ie/osh](http://www.has.ie/osh)

#### **Irish Energy Centre**

Glasnevin, Dublin 9  
Tel: 01-8639080  
Fax: 01-8732824  
e-mail: [info@irish-energy.ie](mailto:info@irish-energy.ie)



