THE REFURBISHMENT OF COUNCIL HOMES AT MEXBOROUGH IN DONCASTER

CLIENT                ST LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER
                      MANAGERS OF DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL’S 22,000 HOMES

CONTRACTOR            BRAMALL CONSTRUCTION

COMMUNITY REGENERATION SPECIALISTS BRAMALL CONSTRUCTION USED CLIP TO HELP THEM IMPROVE DELIVERY TIMES, REDUCE SNAGGING AND COSTS, AND INCREASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Neil Baxter, Managing Director of Bramall Construction, explains how CLIP helped the company to achieve a ‘right-first-time’ mentality.

Background to the project
Bramall Construction applied the CLIP approach on a project to refurbish council homes. Bramall Construction specialise in the regeneration and construction of public sector housing throughout Yorkshire, Humber, East Midlands and the North West. At Mexborough Bramall worked alongside St Leger Homes, the organisation responsible for managing and improving Doncaster’s council homes.

What attracted us to the CLIP programme
We were searching for a tool that would support our quality management system by involving those who actually carry out the work in people’s homes – ie by fully engaging those who are the experts in their areas. We wanted help in changing our work culture from one of working to Clerk of Works standards to one with a ‘right-first-time’ mentality. The fact that some grant funding was available from the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, was an added incentive.

What our aims and expectations were
Our aim initially was to understand why two projects, carrying out the same works, were performing differently. Then, once we understood the reasons why one project was performing better, we planned to replicate across all our sites the processes that had been identified as good practice.

Bramall wanted to fully engage the operatives actually carrying out the work in people’s homes.

In addition we wanted to develop a way of working that could easily be communicated to all new starters in the business, to ensure that we offered a consistently high service to our customers.

How the CLIP process worked for us
The St Leger Homes refurbishment contract in Mexborough was used to introduce the CLIP programme to Bramall Construction.

Identifying issues of concern
Workshops were held that involved representatives from Bramall and St Leger and were facilitated by a CLIP engineer. An early stage site trade operatives (from Bramall and the subcontractors) were invited to share the issues giving them concern. The key issues highlighted were:

- the fact that trades have to re-visit sites
- the need to improve quality performance.

Data analyses
At subsequent CLIP workshops analyses of the Clerk of Works ‘snags’ and internal site snagging data were carried out to determine key areas of improvement. This gave two potential focus areas – the work of the electrical and plumbing trades – and also highlighted the need to look more closely at snags prior to plastering and final snag.

Site delivery statistics were also analysed. While planned delivery time was 25 days the actual average time was 30 days, and ranged from 17 to 49 days. This highlighted the need to look at why there was such variation in delivery performance.

Direct observation
The CLIP team observed a dwelling at the ‘pre-finisher’ stage with the site manager. The outstanding snags were recorded and assessed as to when and who should have completed the task.

It was noted that the ‘finisher’ – responsible for sealing and clearing – was having to complete the snags of other trades which should have been completed at the pre-paint stage. The team agreed that there should be ‘hold points’ at key positions in the programme, and that the trades listed should have completed at these points.

Task completion sheets
Bramall are looking to roll out the task completion process developed in this project on all refurbishment sites.
On the basis of the information gathered, and in consultation with all trades and with Bramall and St Leger teams, process task completion sheets were developed. Work tasks to be carried out were identified and included protecting the tenant’s goods and removing all debris and packaging etc. The sheet is signed as complete by the tradesmen, counter signed by his supervisor and returned to the site office at the end of the day.

How we benefited from this initiative
The simple process of using the new task completion sheets resulted in work being complete before the next stage/trade needed to start work. The ‘finishing’ process was considerably reduced and, in some cases, not required at all. The outcome was highly positive, the 25-day programme was achieved and in some cases improved, snags were substantially reduced and, due to the leaner way of working, Bramall used two fewer operatives on the Mexborough contract, giving a saving on weekly costs. All St Leger Homes contracts with Bramall Construction now use task completion sheets. Packs are made up for each property containing a task sheet for each element of work.

A subsequent contract at Hexthorpe achieved 100% tenant satisfaction and its 25-day ‘time-in-property’ cycle has been reduced to a 20-day average. The inspection process of one in ten inspections can be achieved much earlier in the contract by using the task completion sheets, giving the client confidence that works are complete in un-inspected properties. In the areas covered by the sheets, zero snags have now been achieved.

Future use of the lessons learned
We are now looking to roll out the task completion process developed during the CLIP exercise at Mexborough, on all Bramall Construction refurbishment sites. The CLIP approach is now being tried out on one of Bramall Construction’s new build projects.

Key saving
Using task completion sheets developed during the CLIP process, Bramall Construction has cut its time-in-property refurbishment cycle by 20%, reduced or eliminated snagging and made savings on labour costs. These factors have all contributed to an increase in customer satisfaction ratings.

Learning points
Encouraging all trades to fully engage with the project and share their concerns can quickly highlight problem areas on which action can then be effectively focussed.

Without a system for checking task completion, the finisher can end up having to complete the snags of other trades and spend much longer on site than should be necessary.

Task completion sheets with hold points at key positions in the programme, where the trades listed should have completed their work, can reduce and even eliminate snagging.