

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. At 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 cleaning – 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.

Supported by



The Region's
Development Agency

'The outcome of the CLIP process was highly positive. It has helped us to understand why some projects were performing better, and replicate across our sites the processes identified as good practice. The new ways of working can easily be communicated to new staff, and therefore ensure we offer a consistently high service to our customers.'

Neil Baxter, Managing Director of Bramall Construction

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.



An introduction to CLIP

The Construction Lean Improvement Programme, or CLIP for short, is a new approach that aims to boost performance and profitability.

Over the last four years CLIP has been adapting lean tools and techniques for use in the construction industry. CLIP has worked successfully with more than 100 construction companies across the construction supply chain with most achieving productivity improvements of up to 50% in key processes.

'Following this project we have been able to cut the time on site at properties being refurbished to an average of 20 days, from a planned 25 days, and achieve a tenant satisfaction rate of 98%.'

Neil McKinnon, Best Practice Manager, Bramall Construction

CLIP works by focusing companies on improving the quality, cost, efficiency and delivery of a product or service, to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction. It provides the knowledge and practical skills needed to take the highly theoretical topic of lean construction, and turn it into a practical tool that they can implement effectively.

The heart of each company's CLIP programme consists of a tailored improvement activity built up of our core Masterclass modules. The programme is designed so that a company can pick and choose the range of tools and expertise available in the modules that it needs.

In this case study we feature the use of 'the Lean Processes Masterclass'. This looks at ways of improving quality, cost and delivery by looking in detail at key processes during a 3-9 month programme of intensive improvement activities. Plans are then put in place to roll out improvements through the company.

