



# What can Principal Contractors do to improve performance on defects and repairs?

In my last [post](#), I explored some areas where both principal contractors and their registered provider partners could possibly learn from each other if they embraced the ethos of partnering.

In this post I will look at some practical quick wins for Principal contractors when managing the defect warranty period for new homes in partnership with Registered providers..

## How can Principal contractors improve their handover and Warranty period?



**Stick to the plan.** Communication between the Principal Contractor and the Registered Provider (RP) needs to be excellent. Provide accurate and advance notice to the RP's development team of the agreed handover dates for respective properties. Allow ample time for your team to pull together all the information and training required for both the RP's development team and the tenant on handover.

Arrange a pre-handover meeting to run through your plans for the handover day and ensure that all parties are 100% happy with this approach. Handover day can be a frantic experience if not managed correctly. Follow your pre-agreed procedures and ensure all paperwork is completed accordingly with appropriate signatures.

Aim to finish with Zero items on handover.

Defects will always exist, its part and parcel of the process however simple internal quality inspection procedures leading up to handover day can significantly reduce these.

**Be proud to be pedantic.** Take the time to Inspect each property, agreeing with all parties involved that there are no issues with the new home on handover will prove extremely beneficial if in a couple of weeks time the resident has reported numerous defects with kitchen sinks, sanitary ware, damaged kitchen units etc.

Having the ability to refer to the signed handover documents will prove invaluable if trying to prove that the resident has damaged items in their new home.



Ensure that all important documents are stored securely at your office with digital copies for future reference if required. Landlord Gas safety certificates and Electrical certificates etc are best stored in your archived system at head office.

Don't rely on a resident to keep these documents safe in the property...

**Keep it simple.** In my experience, residents won't read a vast home owner manual; they will prefer simply to telephone their Registered Provider if they have queries or repairs.

Produce clear, concise, simpler user guides with diagrams. Laminate these guides and attach to the inside of kitchen cupboards. Explore the possibility

of producing a short film (DVD) of common maintenance tips and emergency actions, for example, how to re-pressurise the central heating system.

Provide your client with clear details on your Customer care approach. If you have a system in place outline the steps to reporting issues in clear simple language.

The clients may have a team of Customer service personnel who will be dealing with the new residents so ease of communication between both parties is key to resident satisfaction.

**Feedback.** Provide simple feed back to the client when a reported defect has been dealt with – and even when it hasn't (for example, if a part is on order); communication is fundamental to good Customer Care.

Follow up where possible with information detailing how defects have been dealt with, not just an email saying they have been done. This can provide valuable information regarding recurring issues with both the resident and recurring repairs.

Analyse defects data on previous developments and respond by eliminating these on future jobs – were the defect down to materials, or workmanship, or a particular sub-contractor?

**Communicate with your Sub-contractors.** Take responsibility for your sub-contractors. Most sub-contractors are a reasonable bunch.

Create a Customer Care Charter outlining your expectations of them outlining that they are representing your company in occupied properties. Communicate the respond and repair guidelines.

You can't blame your sub-contractors for not responding within agreed time-scales if they are not aware of them.

Explain in simple terms your companies approach to the retention of monies if they do not perform as per agreed contract in relation to defects and repairs. Involve your commercial team, poorly performing sub-contractors should be removed from tender list.

**Take a step back.** Feed back your analysis of the most common defects (on a quarterly basis) to your client – so both parties can learn from it. For example, if they are receiving a lot of reports from residents on issues with central heating and topping up boilers, maybe the handover wasn't as clear or comprehensive as it should have been.



If your company is asked to agree to response times that you know your business can't cope with due to lack of resource or geography, retain the services of a specialist multi-skilled response teams to support your out of office hours reported items.

**Plan again.** End of warranty can be as important as handover day. Tighten up this process – a resident could have visits from three or four trades, a Clerk of Works, the contractor and the Registered Provider.

Consider this, could the agreed end of warranty issues be completed by your clients maintenance team?

Agree a cost for the items reported and speed up the process for all parties. This process can be further improved by having a foreman on site for two weeks around sign-off time to liaise with residents and facilitate access.

Get the resident to sign a form to say that your End of Warranty list has been completed – and make sure these are returned to your client.

Completing these steps efficiently will ensure that you receive your practical completion certificate and any outstanding retention monies from your client promptly.