

TPC 2005 – Practitioner award

Innovation in partnering using TPC 2005

Mears and livin

Mears' partnership with livin (formerly Sedgefield Borough Homes) began in 2008 when the local authority, Sedgefield Borough Council, made a decision to adopt a new partnership-orientated model for their asset management services. The years following the establishment of the partnership have seen a range of important achievements, service improvements and efficiency gains. TPC 2005, the ability of all partnerships to successfully use this contract form to affect change and the Core Group have been the key drivers behind these results.

The former council wanted a contract based on quality and price in such a way to favour partnership working. The tenants wanted an improved service which delivered services whilst still providing value for money. It was decided that the best contract for this approach was TPC 2005 as it offered the ideal opportunity for integrated team work and measurable improvement. In February 2008 Mears won the contract to provide repairs & maintenance, gas servicing and repairs, voids and planned works, putting Mears in a unique position to support livin as a key service provider. The 'Towards Excellence' plan commenced in 2010 and became the foundation for identifying and implementing the improvements that have been carried out since. In true partnership working both livin and Mears have worked together to develop the Towards Excellence Plan. The Core Group was key to delivering this joint partnership working. It enabled both Mears and livin to not only develop strong, productive working relationships at the operational level but also jointly own a shared vision of key objectives, outcomes and strategic priorities. Mears and livin senior managers are adamant that these successes would have been far more difficult to achieve without the use of the Core Group and the wider partnering framework that TPC2005 offers.

The emphasis and focus on continuous improvement inherent within TPC2005 was successfully adopted by both partners. This created a real sense of ownership, led from the very top by the Core Group. In 2010 Mears and livin worked together to look at what could be improved:

- Mears led a review of service - an in-depth assessment of gas and response services which identified a number of issues on both sides that needed to be reviewed and improved
- From this assessment a plan was drawn up with all actions managed and monitored through the Covalent performance management system enabling easier prioritisation and delivery. The plan included actions for both livin and Mears to ensure that all were improving partnership working
- A Towards Excellence Team was created, sponsored and mentored by members of the Core Group. The team included service managers from livin and Mears along with tenant representatives. The tenant representatives are responsible for communicating the work of the team to other residents.
- Phase 1 started in 2010 concentrating on improvements in repairs and gas servicing. The majority of the identified improvement actions have now been completed, embedding continuous improvement, and improved partnering has become central to the ethos of the service with all parties working together to achieve improvements

- The legacy of the work that both Mears and livin have carried out on this contract has influenced the development of the National CIH repairs charter for Housing. Mears led the development in partnership with CIH, and livin was a key member of the advisory group and shared how its experiences with Mears improved services. These examples were included in the final Charter (see Appendix 1). In this sense, TPC 2005 created the solid foundations on which a nationally recognised repairs improvement programme was developed and implemented.
- Mears and livin are keen to share their learning and approach with others in the sector

The partnership between Mears and livin is now in its fourth year. TPC2005 has been an integral component in facilitating the growth and success of this relationship through providing a clear, robust and mutually-agreeable strategy for developing a long term partnership rather than a transactional approach that focuses on short-term pain/gain. TPC 2005 has enabled Mears and livin to work collaboratively to identify improvements and put into place jointly-owned strategies for achieving these goals. It has enabled all parties to achieve clarity and transparency on respective contractual obligations. In this way, TPC 2005 has played an in important role in fostering and deepening trust between client and contractor.

TPC 2005 is no panacea; commitment, stamina and a willingness to jointly solve challenges and issues are vital. But the contract form has been an undeniably intrinsic component in the journey of continuous improvement towards excellence. Both Mears and livin are certain that achievements and successes would be far less extensive had an alternative contractual form been adopted. The tables below on pages 4-5 demonstrate this through a range of improved performance measures.

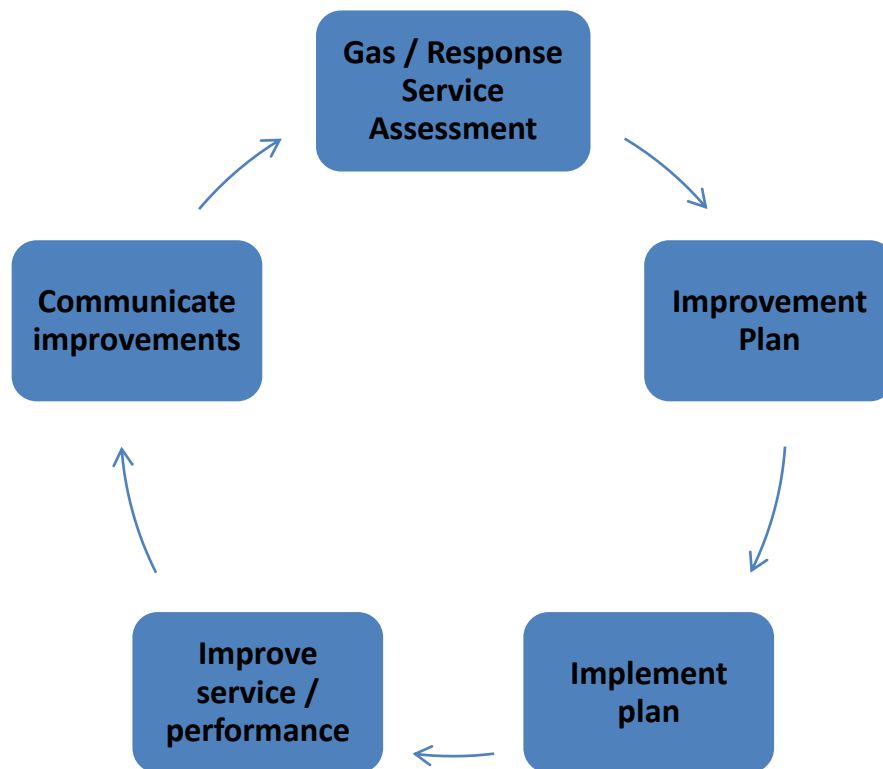
By October 2011 the livin Board was so pleased with Mears' performance that they exercised the option to take up the two year contract extension. This decision was taken considering the partnership's performance over the last three years and after a HQN market assessment of options open to livin. In short livin had been very impressed with the full range of services achieved through the partnership and TPC 2005; not least the excellent package of value added services received. This is particularly strong in the areas of local labour recruitment, local supplier base and creating apprenticeships. A brief quote from the market assessment by HQN is provided below:

"Flexible operating hours, appointments made at the first point of contact, vast majority of jobs completed on first visit and improved customer satisfaction are all essential characteristics of a maintenance service shaped around the needs of customers and each of these can be found in the livin/Mears arrangement" ...

"From a continuous improvement perspective and as importantly, the need to deliver more for less, HQN considers that subject to Mears' proposals being confirmed and agreed, extending the contract is the only option that has the greatest potential to deliver real and quantifiable savings". HQN

Towards Excellence Project overview

The diagram below demonstrates the clear approach to continuous improvement that the partnership was able to adopt thanks to TPC 2005:



The following tables show the top improvements that have been made in each work stream:

Repairs Maintenance: Continuous Improvement –The Impact of TPC 2005

Previous Service	Current Service
Repairs reported via Durham County Council call centre	Repairs reported via dedicated livin call centre using 24hr freephone number
Varied levels of repair diagnosis and use of locator system	Fully trained customer services advisors, utilising improved scripting, locator system and integrated Mears planners/advisors
Repairs issued via a priority system (A, B, C, E)	Only 2 priorities of emergency and non-emergency – more customer focused and recognised in Inside Housing as best practice. Achieving a saving of £44,000 on No Access
Outdated policy and procedures	Repairs policy approved, updated responsive repairs procedures drafted
Overall Satisfaction of 91%	Overall Satisfaction of 98%

Out of Hours Service: Continuous Improvement –The Impact of TPC 2005

Previous Service	Current Service
Out of Hours calls made to Durham County Council’s Carelink Service	24hr freephone number which diverts to dedicated Call centre
High numbers of non-emergency works attended to	Dedicated staff diagnose emergencies and issue security passwords to tenants

Repair issued to sub contractor on a make safe basis which often required follow ups	Repairs carried out by Mears operatives with 87% completed RFT (Top quartile)
All other requests/repairs needed to be reported by tenants the following day	Details are taken from tenant and repair appointments for during the day can be made
Satisfaction of 91%	Satisfaction of 95%

Gas Servicing: Continuous Improvement –The Impact of TPC 2005

Previous Service	Current Service
Gas safety check compliance at 98.6%	Gas safety check compliance at 99.8%
'In house' and sub-contractor arrangement in place for gas servicing	'In house' delivery of gas servicing, including function testing of battery and hard wired Smoke/CO detectors
All day appointments made with tenants	AM/PM appointments made, plus special appointments on request.
Minimal measures in place to reduce the problem of 'No Access'	Monitoring of no access and of 'repeat offenders'. Text Ahead introduced, taping up of front doors, prize draw incentive, daily communication with livin's Support and Intervention team.
Customer Satisfaction of 95%	Customer Satisfaction of 99%

Moving Forward – Phase 2

In March 2012 the majority of improvements were completed on Phase 1 and the Towards Excellence team moved forward on to Phase 2. TPC 2005 will remain at the heart of driving through continuous improvement, providing clear guidance, support and reference points for partners.

The Towards Excellence Team will concentrate on the following in Phase 2:

- Embed new response procedures
- Review Voids and put improvements in place
- Finalise new Gas procedures
- Capital and Planned works to be reviewed in the future
- Self-assess against CIH repairs Charter

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates how in the right environment, TPC 2005 plays an integral role in creating and sustaining an excellent partnership that achieves the goal of continuous improvement. The Towards Excellence team emerged through the joint working and shared commitment of the Core Group, showing how an integrated team working together really can achieve excellence. The team has incorporated all aspects of items that had not been covered under previous contracts again emphasising the positive influence of TPC 2005. These included:

- An integrated multi party team – Mears, livin, and tenants working together
- A full communication strategy – Towards Excellence Plan
- Provision for continuous improvement – Phase 2
- Measures of improvement – KPIs
- Partnering timetable for key activities – Towards Excellence plan has actions and the dates that they should be completed
- Mobilisation provisions linked with TUPE
- Development of more open pricing over the life of the programme – moved to Open Book
- Supply Chain partnering

The following quote from Colin Steel, Chief Executive of livin shows that the partnership, underpinned by TPC 2005 is working:

“Since the partnership with Mears was established we have made some major improvements to services which have resulted in significant efficiency savings, but more importantly improved services we provide to our tenants. We are continuing to implement improvements identified by the Towards Excellence group and look forward to working with Mears to deliver exceptional service.”