

Defects Policy

Richardson Projects provide a Customer Support Services Team for all our sites, which offers a direct approach to dealing with clients and occupiers. Our local teams of approachable staff are always on-call to provide an excellent service which may involve problem diagnosis and remedial action. The teams are very experienced in dealing with occupied properties during refurbishment contracts or throughout defects liability periods. Our defects policy is an integral factor in ensuring client and occupier satisfaction.

In accordance with Egan recommendations and our continuous improvement programme, the company examined our response to reactive and twelve-month defects procedures. It was therefore apparent that there had been shortfalls in defect management and rectification. A new procedure was therefore implemented and co-ordinated by a Maintenance Manager working alongside our existing Foreman and this partnership led to the creation of a dedicated Customer Support Services Team to improve overall response to defects. Since inception, the division has seen a massive improvement in the way defects are handled, and a reduction in the number of overall defects which has also been recognised by a number of key clients and occupier. It has now become company policy to ensure that we receive signed verification from an occupier when a defect has been satisfactorily rectified. In an effort to resolve whether defects are genuine or simply a lack of understanding of new systems, the company has been working with certain clients on their own defects procedures. This has helped to reduce the number of abortive call-outs and improve overall systems. Our proposals have included improved demonstration of mechanical and electrical systems and key prompts from clients to ensure occupiers are satisfied with the information they receive from us.

Case study – reducing abortive work

During installation of a new monitoring system we realised that approximately 50% of the defects were mechanical and electrical and the vast majority were abortive call outs. The main problem appeared to be that occupiers did not fully understand their heating equipment. Therefore, the company developed a system of improved training which was introduced at handover and included detailed instruction leaflets for occupier's information. This resulted in a noticeable reduction in the number of defects reported to Richardson Projects.

Quality control

The company has recently received the prestigious ISO 9001 accreditation after almost 8 months of rigorous assessment in meeting the designated criteria specified by the BSI, the official national standards body in the UK. This quality-based award provides certification that our centralised management system, including system of best practice, provides uniform standards which all staff and operatives work towards to ensure that our customer expectations are managed effectively.

Richardson Projects are committed to achieving zero defects through our quality control systems and allocation of the correct time periods for final finishing works. It is our experience that this dedicated finishing period produces the high quality products. We also ensure that we recruit the correct suppliers and sub-contractors in order to achieve best value. Repetition of defects is followed by a full investigation which has revealed that in a number of cases, the Company has discovered that the provision of a higher quality material or product is necessary, than the one specified. In certain circumstances delaying the installation of certain components until a later stage of construction can also reduce defects. Our standard design & build specification incorporates materials and methods which are the highest in quality as we have found that this has helped reduce defects.

Examples include:

- Internal doors fixed later preventing dampness penetrating from the wet trades
- Avoidance of full fill cavity wall insulation due to the risk of damp penetration
- Tongue and groove flooring instead of chipboard

In addition, prior to the hand over or completion of any property or unit within the project, an intense period of quality control is undertaken as detailed below:

- Property audit carried out by the following members of staff:
 - General Foreman
 - Site Manager
 - Contracts Manager
- Undertaking of initial snag and completion of our standard snag checklists
- Correction of any defective snagging work by appropriate trades
- Once these outstanding items have been completed, our staff will then cross check the snag list and sign it off
- During the works, key stage inspections will take place to reduce the snagging items identified upon completion
- A finishing supervisor would be employed on site with the job function of ensuring all properties will be handed over for snagging by the clerk of works
- The client or employer's agent will then be provided with gas and electric test certificates
- The Client is presented with maintenance manuals and a CDM Health and Safety file at handover that contains the following documentation:
 - As-built drawings including Architects, Structural, Mechanical, Electrical and Service Authorities
 - Service and equipment instructions and technical data
 - Any relevant warranties
 - Our After Care Service information

Defect Recording

We have an effective system for recording, monitoring and analysing defects. All defects are recorded by our Customer Support Services Team who collate the following information:

- Nature of the defect
- Customer contact details
- Date received
- Target date for completion
- Date of rectification

Using our database, we are able to monitor and analyse defect trends and identify any recurring issues which can then be addressed, for example:

- The number of defects
- The type of defects
- Response time
- Equipment ease of use in resident homes
- Other on-site quality issues

Our Maintenance Manager has the responsibility of analysing defects and provides regular feedback and recommendations for year-on-year defect reduction. The company records performance in relation to overall defect responses and all data is collated by our KPI co-ordinator to ensure we are achieving benchmark targets. Our experience in evaluating current and historical defect statistics has helped improve our relationships with stakeholders such as clients and occupiers and reduce the number of defects to our dwellings.

Case Study – overall defects per property

A trend analysis of our KPI's for the period 2003–2005 has shown a significant decrease in the number of defects per completed dwellings from 0.52 in 2003 to 0.31 in 2005 suggesting that our new practises are having a positive impact.

Defect Rectification

We have a large number of directly employed operatives, including labourers, bricklayers and joiners who readily complete any defects or rectify poor quality workmanship. Our sub-contractors provide site supervisors with details on quality issues and defect resolution. As mentioned previously, defects are managed by our Customer Support Services Team and rectified either by our mobile units or with the assistance of our sub-contractors. Closer monitoring of quality by the contractor and Clerk of Works can help diminish the number of defects experienced at hand over. Approximately 4 weeks before contract hand over, properties are prepared for pre-hand over snagging to avoid last minute completion delays. High level supply chain management such as supplier and sub-contractor deployment is also essential in achieving best value and to ensure timely completion of works.

General Post Contract Defect Rectification Procedures

Upon completion of all developments, details of our After Sales Service are issued to the client and end user of the building. Our project and customer care team will attend handovers along with the Clerk of Works, Employer's Agent and representatives from the Client. Our Customer Care Manager will explain how to operate any mechanical apparatus which may be installed, including central heating, burglar alarms and smoke detectors. Service positions will also be identified, including gas, water, electric, telephone and cable. A full and concise Handover Manual is left with both the Client and the occupier. This includes user instructions, drawings identifying service positions, all necessary guarantees and details of all local amenities and services such as schools, transport, doctors and shops.

The specific procedures are as follows:

- Following a reported defect by a client, occupier or the client's representative, the maintenance team will assess the nature of the complaint received
- Complaints are dealt with within a specified timescale and dealt with by the party responsible. e.g. company or sub-contractor
- Richardson Projects can attend to any outstanding issues and all charges for both labour and materials for defect rectification will be covered by the party responsible
- Our representatives will arrange appointments for remedial works and an identity card given to our Customer Services Team who will carry out the works. If the occupier is not present, our calling card will be left at the property to allow them to set up a further appointment
- Any problems or queries during remedial works will be reported directly to the Client's helpdesk to provide up to date feedback
- The completed job card will be given to the maintenance office ensuring that charges against the department responsible are made. Records are kept and filed in the Maintenance Manager's office
- The sub-contractor or our maintenance team will obtain a customer satisfaction note from the occupier as confirmation that the works have been attended to. A copy note is then issued to Head Office

Out of Hours Emergency Defect Procedures

We would like to remind all our stakeholders that our 'out of hours' service should be used for emergencies only. Any non-emergency works reported may be refused or recharged. When reporting repairs, we require detailed information to enable us to ensure the repairs are attended to effectively and efficiently. Wasted call outs due to either residents not keeping appointments or misusing the property, may incur costs which are recharged. Please note that the following only be taken as emergencies:

* Heating/Water * Drain Blockages * Security problems i.e. Locks

All other defects will be dealt with in the usual manner.