



Planned Delivery Review

Resident Scrutiny Group

RSG PROJECT LEAD: DENNIS CLAY

OCTOBER 2022

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Introduction

Abri is responsible for the maintenance to the structure and internal components of all rented properties. The planned delivery programme is an essential part of looking after the longevity of the properties and keeping standards high for customers.

Following the Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG) customer consultation in February 2022, planned delivery was ranked by customers as one of the top three priorities for the RSG to focus on. Therefore, it was agreed that this should be included in this year's review schedule.

The project group discussed an approach to narrow down what is an extensive topic. After discussion and reviewing the information relating to all elements of planned delivery, the customer journey was identified as being a priority with the following areas of focus:

- Geographical differences
- Communication methods
- Communication throughout the process

Overall, the RSG found that the planned delivery process is effective in delivery and install of components but has identified several areas that could further improve the overall customer experience throughout the planned maintenance journey. The RSG has also identified a number of additional questions they would like to explore regarding the prioritisation of the planned maintenance programme and delivery against this that were outside the scope of this review and will therefore be exploring these with Abri. An addendum to this report will be issued once this work has concluded.

Approach

Members of the project group met with the Head of Property Care to further understand the planned delivery process and the various stages involved. These include starting with a property being added to a programme all the way through to post completion customer satisfaction. The focus group agreed to review the complete customer journey, including all written communication to customers who are part of the planned delivery programme.

The project group felt it important to understand the complete customer journey for this topic as planned delivery works can be some of the most disruptive to a customer whilst living in an Abri property. Therefore, it is important that Abri ensures this is managed as effectively and efficiently as possible to avoid any long-term negative impact on customers.

It is proposed that the recommendations made in this report will be assigned to the Executive Director - Operations with the intention that these will be reassigned to the appropriate roles within the organisation.

Findings and Recommendations

The Customer Journey

1. The focus group was interested to learn about what the planned delivery programme was, how properties were selected and subsequently how customers were

communicated with throughout the whole journey. The review commenced with a session with the Head of Property Care and the focus group, during which the annual programme was discussed as well as the differences between asset management and planned delivery.

2. Members were advised that the Asset Management team are responsible for creating the planned maintenance programme in line with Abri's Asset Management Strategy. The Planned Delivery team are responsible for undertaking the component replacement works in line with the programme provided by the Asset Management team.
3. Abri develops its annual planned maintenance programme from its stock condition data, which highlights the year in which any replacement is due. Cyclical stock condition surveys are undertaken at all properties and the data collected from these inspections help to determine when works should be required. The team then carry out further analysis to create deliverable programmes in close geographic locations, considering the capacity within the business and through our supply chains.
4. The focus group noted that there is currently no process map for the planned maintenance cycle that colleagues can refer to when communicating with customers. The RSG recommend that a process map detailing the customer journey is created and saved centrally to allow colleagues from across the business to understand the various stages of the process and confidently share this information with customers when answering queries.
5. Abri replaces components in all rented properties in line, or sooner than, the lifecycles recommended within the Decent Homes' Standard (DHS), with the exception of boilers (see paragraph 4).

Life cycle of components in years		
	Abri	Decent Home Standard
Kitchen	23	30
Bathroom	30	40
Gas Boiler	18	15
Electric Heating	30	40
Windows	30	40
Doors	30	40
Roof	70	70

6. The replacement of boilers is the only component which has a lifecycle above that recommended by the DHS. Following enquiries, it was established that this is, because the 18-year replacement cycle has been set for installations post 2015, where Abri can demonstrate that the make and model of boiler is an A rated condensing boiler. This is the most energy efficient boiler on the market.

The rationale for the 18-year cycle is as follows:

- As a result of annual servicing and quality maintenance regimes replacement volumes due to a failure within the first 15 years of these boilers in Abri properties is less than 1%.

- The main part of a boiler is the heat exchange unit, and this was lasting 10 years and then replaced, giving the boiler another 10 years life until a second replacement was due. It was deemed uneconomic to replace the heat exchange unit when the replacement part is not being expected to be in operation for at least 8 years.
7. Abri performs well against its own lifecycle ambitions, generally replacing major items between five and 10 years prior to the guidance set out in DHS. For example, a bathroom is recommended to be replaced every 40 years in the DHS and Abri replace every 30 years. Abri endeavours to replace components aligned to its recommended lifecycles but will use the buffer of 10 years to create the deliverable programmes identified above should we need to.
 8. The group was interested to learn how Abri performs against other housing providers in relation to the delivery of planned maintenance. The Business Insight team confirmed that Abri does not report specific planned maintenance performance information to Housemark and so a direct comparison exercise was not possible. However, the team advised that Abri does report on a Headline Social Housing Cost Per Unit measure, but this includes all maintenance completed on properties and not just planned. Abri's end of year 21/22 performance for this is below and shows that Abri was well under the benchmark median. As of the end of Q2, Abri was forecasting to be at £4,071 at the end of March 2023.

KPI Name	Original Budget	Optimum Abri Budget	Abri (RAG vs Benchmark)	2021/22 Benchmark Median	Sector Performance
Headline Social Housing Cost Per Unit	£4,250	£3,783	£3,817	£4,230	The post-pandemic increase in maintenance expenditure coupled with construction industry price inflation led the median social housing cost per unit to rise over £300, in a year to £4,230 in 2021/22.

Action Ref	Recommended Action	Officer Responsible	Deadline
PD1022.1	To create a uniformed customer journey map for the planned delivery programme	Head of Property Care	31st March 2023

Communication

9. A notable outcome from the discussions and information reviewed is that there was a significant difference in the customer experience regarding communication at different stages of the process. Letters are sent to customers containing different information, and at different stages on the 'East' and 'West' side of the business. The RSG understands that this is due to the legacy organisation processes, however this does have an impact on the level of service received by the customers.
10. It was evident from the letters and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents, and a discussion with members of the trades team that took place in a scheduled RSG

meeting, that there was not enough transparency on time scales. Customers are made aware that works can take X number of days to complete, however information is not provided that each aspect of a job may be conducted by a different colleague/contractor and that there may be delays between each element. This may mean that the complete installation time could be significantly more than written in the letters and FAQ guides.

11. It was noted that the FAQ guides were comprehensive but could include further information to improve customer readiness for the works being conducted in their homes. These include changing contractor specific names to ‘*Abri approved contractor*’ to remove any risk of confusion or frustration to customers if the previously stated contractor is no longer able to conduct the works. These should also include assurance that the operative will inform the customer of any amenities being turned off whilst in their property and adding alternative contact methods for non-digital customers.
12. The guides that the focus group reviewed were specifically written for customers based in the West as part of the legacy process, therefore were only relevant to a portion of the customer base. It is worth noting that the group only reviewed these as there were none available for the East’s geography. Members agreed that including FAQ guides in all communications between East and West customers would ensure the experience was consistent across all programmes.
13. The group discussed the effect that extensive works can have within the community and felt that it would be beneficial for neighbours to be notified out of courtesy that there could be the potential for disruption and noise whilst works are being conducted. It was recognised that the best possible method would be for Abri Trades Colleagues to carry a ‘notification card’ that could be posted though the letter box of the properties that may be affected upon the commencement of the works.
14. Customers who have had works completed are sent a post satisfaction survey via text message. Whilst this is something the group welcomed, they felt that it was not completely inclusive for all customers, especially those with no mobile device or who are categorised as non-digital. Conducting a post completion satisfaction survey should be undertaken by the customer’s preferred method of contact where possible.
15. The RSG recognised that the implementation of Single Systems at Abri plays a significant part in the processes of the programme. It was noted that the organisation is operating using legacy letters and processes instead of an aligned approach. This includes letters, FAQ guides and communication regarding booking of appointments. However, the RSG sees the implementation of single systems as an opportunity to align all communication with customers regardless of geography.

Action Ref	Recommended Action	Officer Responsible	Deadline
PD1022.2	Align, agree, and send appropriate letters to customers at each specific stage of the planned maintenance process in line with the customer journey map (PD1022.1). These should provide a consistent message across the whole of Abri’s geography.	Head of Property Care	30th June 2023

PD1022.3	Ensure transparency on timescales is discussed with and followed up in writing to customers.	Head of Property Care	31st March 2023
PD1022.4	Send a FAQ guide out to all customers regardless of geography.	Head of Property Care	31 st March 2023
PD1022.5	FAQ guides to be updated as follows: 1) Replace reference to specific named contractors to an ' <i>Abri approved contractor</i> ' 2) Add confirmation that the operative attending will advise the customer when turning off amenities within the property 3) Include details on communication means for non-digital and non-portal customers and signpost these.	Head of Property Care	31 st March 2023
PD1022.6	Introduce 'we are working in your area' cards for neighbouring properties that the operatives can put through customer letter boxes when starting on site.	Head of Property Care	31st March 2023
PD1022.7	Expand the post completion satisfaction surveys to include non-digital customers by not only conducting these via text message.	Head of Property Care	31st March 2023

Conclusion

Overall, Abri's approach to planned maintenance delivery and installation of components is effective and they are replaced in accordance with, or better than, the Decent Home Standard. However, there is an opportunity to improve the planned maintenance process for the customer by strengthening communication throughout the customer journey. The recommendations contained within this report have been proposed to ensure that Abri continues to strengthen relationships with customers and improve the overall service received. An addendum to this report will be issued covering the prioritisation of the planned maintenance programme and delivery against this following the identification of additional questions during the course of this review that the RSG would like to explore with Abri.