



# Livin: repairs, voids and capital investment works

At Mears we deliver repairs and maintenance, void properties and capital investment works. We provide innovative housing solutions to the clients and communities we work with.

Since 2008 Mears has been Livin's strategic partner working under an integrated delivery model as the 'Livin Works' team. All contract management functions are co-located in the client's head office.

As principal contractor our direct delivery team of 68 operatives and 25 staff manage and deliver works to 8,500 homes and non-housing properties across County Durham. In 2016 we retained the contract for a further 7 years, with a possible 3 year extension to 2026.



## What we do

---

Projects providing a mix of repairs, voids, planned and capital investment works

- ▶ 24/7/365 response repairs
- ▶ Void refurbishments
- ▶ External works including FSGs/brick work repairs, roofing and joinery repairs/painting to properties & garages, lightning protection
- ▶ Decent homes refurbishments including kitchen, bathrooms, windows, doors and M&E
- ▶ Gas 24/7/365 breakdown repairs
- ▶ Statutory obligations testing and maintenance: Gas Services (new tenant services, LGSR/LPG/oil checks, services+ boiler replacements/upgrades)
- ▶ Non-domestic boilers: boiler plants, system maintenance on 6 monthly service visits
- ▶ PAT testing
- ▶ Legionella testing
- ▶ Fire risk assessments
- ▶ Fire alarm testing/maintenance
- ▶ Stair lift testing/maintenance
- ▶ Communal and emergency lighting
- ▶ Communal entry door access testing/maintenance
- ▶ Disabled adaptations
- ▶ Out-of-hours call handling (from Mears Rotherham contact centre)



## How we do it

---

The service is locally delivered from our base in Spennymoor, County Durham with our management team co-located with the client and working in open-plan offices (with added social distancing in place, since the outbreak of Covid-19 and more meetings on Microsoft Teams). Supervisors support service desk call handlers to ensure appointments are diagnosed correctly and allocated to an operative with the right materials and experience to complete the work 'right-first time'.

Repairs orders are centrally raised through our client call centre. Through understanding common errors in diagnosis through analysis of the repairs' outcome, we have developed a partnership approach with the client's call centre teams to diagnosis including call scripting and other improvements, expanding into "soft fixes" that are carried out at the point a customer calls, such as boiler resets.

---

Supervisors support service desk call handlers to ensure appointments are diagnosed correctly and allocated to an operative with the right materials and experience to complete the work 'right-first time'.

---

Previously Livin and Mears embarked on a formal repairs and maintenance 'Improvement Plan', led by our 'Towards Excellence' continuous improvement team, also involving 2 tenants. With our client and tenant groups we:

- ▶ Simplified repair priorities from 4 to 2, increasing non-emergency appointments by 300% which improved completion times
- ▶ Implementing an AM/PM appointments system, replacing an 'all day' system
- ▶ Co-located our repair planners at the client's in-hours call centre, improving diagnosis and right first time (RFT) along with simplified priorities
- ▶ Mears 24/7 Customer Service Centre was appointed for out-of-hours call handling, replacing a poor performing outsourced call centre. This resulted in 'Right First Time' rising from 57% to 87%, satisfaction quickly increased to 95% (saving approx. £50,000 annually)





**To increase access rates for gas servicing, we implemented:**

- ▶ Monthly £100 gas prize draw for tenants providing first time access
- ▶ Improved communications: 'Text Ahead' messaging confirming operative's arrival. Tenants left with follow-up appointment details
- ▶ Repeat no access offenders monitored and managed by working with the Livin's Support and Intervention team which led to a reduction in 'no access' rates by 1,200 per year once implemented
- ▶ We introduced our 'no access' key sticker initiative. This has contributed to a reduction in no access numbers. Our engineer places the sticker over the keyhole and takes a photograph of this also to evidence his attendance and allow accurate productivity data to be presented to the client
- ▶ Our first time access rates are now considered to be very high– consistently over 90%
- ▶ We also use feedback to innovate and improve value for money via customer satisfaction surveys, internal staff meetings, and with subcontractors at monthly performance meetings

---

We introduced our 'no access' key sticker initiative. This has contributed to a reduction in no access numbers. Our engineer places the sticker over the keyhole and takes a photograph of this also to evidence his attendance and allow accurate productivity data to be presented to the client.

---

## IT and digital

---

A full interface has been implemented between Livin's Orchard Housing and our contract management system MCM. Orchard operates as the lead system for repairs, servicing and asset management information. Our surveyors update the clients' Keystone asset management system, with our smartphones feeding contract data into Orchard and MCM

- ▶ Implemented sector leading cost capture, analysis and management via MCM to review costs by repair/installation/visit/material. MCM supports spend reviews, value for money exercises and open book cost reviews
- ▶ Smartphones are used to record work activities, including carrying out electronic LGSRs with signature encapsulation. The LGSR is stored on MCM and a PDF version is sent to the client in near real-time
- ▶ Digital self-service: Customers can self-appoint a gas service or non-emergency repair appointment online, via the Livin 'app' on their PC or smartphone. Launched in Jan 2018, 3,000 households use the service. Over 40 operational call-centre hours have been saved since launch

## Smartphone job control systems include:

- ▶ Repair information is encrypted and available on operative's smartphones prior to arrival so they understand the repair issues and any relevant data on customer welfare, such as agreed passwords, hard of hearing and vulnerability issues
- ▶ Tenants receive repair appointment information 24 hours prior to arrival and when the operative is on-route and can text back if no-one is available to provide access
- ▶ Productivity increased by 1 job per day using smartphone-based job control tools; jobs are allocated to the most appropriate operative and supplies are used, the supply store is automatically informed, with replenishment boxes made up before returning
- ▶ Compliance certification for mechanical and electrical works is completed digitally via their smartphone in the customer's home, enabling client staff to sign-off on gas LGSR certificates quickly via their PC and maintain compliance performance, currently at 100%
- ▶ Facilitating the completion of customer satisfaction surveys, completed privately. Data from the survey is digitally sent to our contract management system MCM the moment it has been completed



## Further innovation

---

- ▶ We produced DIY videos accessible to customers via the client's website and YouTube. These have enabled residents to undertake basic repairs themselves
- ▶ Our Repair and Maintenance Plan delivered a step-change in customer-focused service. Key features & outcomes are detailed:
- ▶ Reducing emergency repair backlogs: We simplified repair categories to just 2 (emergency & routine) to reduce emergency repair volumes, increasing the availability of non-emergency appointment timeslots by 300% delivering excellent performance
- ▶ Increasing direct delivery to 97%+ of emergency repairs, improving performance and quality of work
- ▶ We developed a 'soft fix' process to reduce call outs, through self-diagnosis, helping customers fix minor issues during the call

## Effective mobilisation planning and delivery, including TUPE

---

Two highly effective mobilisations have taken place utilising robust procedures to ensure a smooth transition from in-house delivery to Mears followed by a subsequent remobilisation following re-procurement.

In 2008 we TUPE transferred 115 staff from Sedgefield Borough Homes into Mears, attaining LGPS Admitted Body Status with Durham County Council. We honoured all existing T&Cs, future local government pay awards and existing trade union recognitions, with trade union members still in place. Through our robust TUPE consultation, induction and integration activities, we successfully retained many of the original transferees and further invested in training & upskilling to optimise talent and motivation

When the contract was successfully retendered in 2016 our mobilisation activities were focused mainly on delivering our tender commitments and promises as we were the incumbent contractor. Following award we created a promise and commitments register which formed a critical part of our mobilisation plan and activities, ensuring all our promises were implemented for Day 1 of the new partnership.





## Award winning regeneration programme

---

*York Hill Estate:* With Livin and Homes England we have transformed the local community by regenerating 120 homes, transforming public spaces and supporting local projects. Involving decent homes, external improvements and also estate-based highways re-development, the 2-year site programme was completed in July 2017. As designated Principal Contractor the project was completed on-time through extensive planning and collaboration with stakeholders (client, highways agency, local residents) and a rigorous approach to site management and quality monitoring to complete all works to Livin's expectations for quality homes.

## Service delivery model

---

We undertake a wide scope of works, joint planned with the client, and managed and delivered by our predominantly direct delivery workforce. Many 'projects' involve a mixture of services, maximising working efficiencies to deliver value for money and a customer-focused service.

Working across a wide area, repair operatives work in 3 zones, providing a faster response time and helping them to build on their knowledge of the estates and streets they serve.

Mears operatives and engineers work from local merchant supplier outlets to deliver a proactive service responsive to customer needs. Materials are supplied accurately and on-time, exceeding repair performance targets.

Repairs and voids are 90% direct labour and 10% subcontractor. Planned and cyclical works are split 75%/25%. General Manager Mark Rapley leads a team of approx. 110 staff including 6 apprentices.

*Local supply chain:* Our supply chain includes manufacturers Katel (fires), Myson (radiators) and M&B (ironmongery). Year on year supply chain spend is approx. £2.8M.

*Fleet:* Our fleet of 90 vehicles are maintained by our local Spennymoor subcontractor 'Bell Group', who also employ 20 local staff on the contract.

---

Mears operatives and engineers work from local merchant supplier outlets to deliver a proactive service responsive to customer needs.

---