
Maintenance & Management – Definitions and Boundaries

1. The definitions of maintenance, repair, refurbishment, restoration and service life (1) are taken from BS ISO 15686-1:2000 Buildings and Constructed Assets – Service Life Planning – Part 1: General Principles.

- Maintenance – Combination of technical and associated administrative actions during the service life to retain a building or its parts in a state in which it can perform its required functions.
- Repair – return of a building or its parts to an acceptable condition by the renewal, replacement or mending of worn, damaged or degraded parts.
- Refurbishment – modification and improvements to an existing building or its parts to bring it up to an acceptable condition (asset operational, safe, with only minor deterioration).
- Restoration – actions to bring an item to its original appearance or state.
- Backlog (of maintenance) – a backlog in repair, refurbishment and restoration, the consequence of a past failure to carry out maintenance.
- Service life (1) – period of time after installation during which a building or its parts meets or exceeds the performance requirements or
- Service life (2) – the actual period of time during which no excessive expenditure is required on operation, maintenance or repair of a component or construction (source BS 7543L1992 Guide to durability of buildings and building elements, products and components).

The following is an extract from a report for ODPM on maintenance and management budgets for LA's.

1 Boundary between maintenance and management

1.1 Generally

The word 'maintenance' is used freely — and with a sometimes confusing lack of precision — when referring to a wide variety of planned and unplanned building-related activities including (but not limited to) inspection, servicing, repair, replacement and improvement. Its meaning becomes even more indistinct when considered from the perspective of the 'landlord and tenant' relationship which exists in all forms of social housing, and where the notion of maintenance *per se* is invariably bound-up with the issue of housing management. This makes it difficult to objectively assess the necessity of any particular housing maintenance or management service undertaken by a local authority, and to identify what services *should* be provided under the aegis of Item 1, Part II of Schedule 4 of the *Local Government and Housing Act 1989*. (For the purposes of this project, no distinction will be drawn between the direct inclusion of the cost of repairs and maintenance in a Housing Revenue Account and their 'indirect' inclusion via the operation of a separate Housing Repairs Account in accordance with s.77 of the LGHA).

Any attempt to estimate the need to spend on the maintenance and management of the local authority housing stock must therefore begin with a clear understanding of the meaning of the terms 'maintenance' and 'management', and where — in the context of the legislation governing local authority accounting — the boundary between the two might be drawn.

1.2 Meaning of maintenance

Clause 3.5.1 of the internationally-accepted BS ISO 15686-1: 2000 *Building and constructed assets — service life planning: General principles* defines maintenance as the "combination of all technical and associated administrative actions during the life of a building to retain a building or its parts in a state in which it can perform its function".

The "function" of a local authority dwelling (the "building") is to help in ensuring that all sections of society have "the opportunity of a decent home" and to assist in delivering improvements in quality across all types of housing, a commitment set down by the Government in *Quality and Choice: A decent home for all — The way forward for housing* (DETR, December 2000a). It is the role of housing maintenance and management to support this function; hence the importance of the ISO definition and its clear implication for the drawing of a distinction between building maintenance and management — the definition of maintenance can be extended to cover all directly related management tasks.

1.3 Meaning of management

By explicitly defining maintenance as embracing more than just the overtly technical actions (activities) such as painting windows and servicing boilers, it becomes possible to draw a clear distinction between those aspects of management ("administrative actions") that are inextricably linked with building maintenance and those which are not. If the former are — consistent with the ISO definition — designated as maintenance, it follows that the latter are what constitute building management.

Housing management can therefore be defined as those administrative activities that are required to support the function of the local authority as a housing provider (i.e. a social landlord), but which do **not** exist:–

- as a *precursor* to any necessary technical activity (e.g. stock condition surveys, routine inspections, and dealing with tenants' requests for repairs).
- as a *consequence* of a necessary technical activity (e.g. inspecting completed works, authorising payment, and obtaining tenants' feedback on works that are carried out to their homes).
- to *support* the implementation of any necessary technical activity (e.g. keeping and updating building records or preparing the technical aspects of tenants' handbooks).

These are the criteria that distinguish management from maintenance, and which form the basis for the list of services included in the final cost matrix. However, the issues of maintenance and management are entirely unrelated. Careful attention has therefore been paid to those areas where there is a clear overlap, and where the identification of activities common to both services is required (e.g. caretaking and void control).

2 Housing maintenance

2.1 Objectives

The principal objective of local authority housing maintenance is to keep the stock of publicly-owned social housing in good repair, ensuring lettable homes that satisfy tenant aspirations and preserve (though not enhance) their asset value. High quality maintenance is also crucial in ensuring the fulfilment of statutory repairing obligations and the protection of the health, safety and well-being of residents and from preventing dwellings from falling into disrepair. It also has a part to play in achieving the DTLR's public service agreement target of ensuring that all social housing is brought up to a 'decent' standard by 2010.

Maintenance strategies should always aim to strike the optimum balance between planned and unplanned activities, with a strong emphasis being placed on the former. This is because an unplanned 'one-off' item of work will invariably cost more than if the same item is undertaken as part of a larger, structured package — an Audit Commission recommendation of a good-practice benchmark of 60–70% of works costs to be spent on planned maintenance is often cited. (e.g. paragraph 3.32 of Leather et al, 1999).

It is therefore necessary to draw a clear distinction between planned and unplanned activities. This means that the definition of maintenance set out in 1.2 above needs to be refined if it is to be of use in estimating the need to spend under the terms of the *Local Government and Housing Act 1989* (LGHA), and to assist in guiding local authorities towards what they *should* be aiming for in terms of a balance between planned and unplanned maintenance.

2.2 Scope

A good starting point for clarifying the scope and nature of housing maintenance is the definition set down by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in their 1997 Good Practice Briefing note entitled *Planned Maintenance and Improvements*:-

- **Day-to-day repairs** "repairs carried out on an ad hoc responsive basis as the need arises & which can't be deferred for inclusion in planned maintenance programmes."

These types of repair are also described as 'reactive' though, for the purposes of this project, they will be termed 'urgent'. This will distinguish them from those repairs that *can* be deferred. Health, safety, security, and the implications of delay have all been considered in determining what is an 'urgent' repair. Best Value performance indicator BV72 (2001/2002), which deals with the carrying out of urgent repairs, has also helped in drawing this definition.

- **Planned maintenance** "repairs organised and carried out with forethought, control and the use of records to a pre-determined plan." The CIH define three categories of planned maintenance:-

"Programmed repairs and renewals — remedy disrepair, prevent deterioration, and extend life of stock, e.g. rewiring, repointing, window renewal."

"Cyclical works — e.g. external decorations and internal decoration of communal areas."

“Servicing and inspection — e.g. of installations and services such as heating systems, lifts, alarms and door entry systems.”

The category “programmed repairs and renewals” covers day-to-day, non-urgent ‘responsive’ repairs that can be deferred for inclusion in a planned maintenance programme (e.g. isolated areas of repointing or the localised repair of rotten window frames), as well as the periodic replacement of worn sub-components and the major replacement of components at the end of their useful lives.

However, under the terms of s.40 of the LGHA, major replacement is most properly classed as “enhancement” (i.e. works intended “to lengthen substantially the useful life of an asset”). Such expenditure is deemed as being for “capital purposes” and therefore not covered by the definition of “expenditure on maintenance, management and repairs” given in Schedule 4 (capital expenditure is distinctly covered by Item 2 of Part II). The major replacement of components — which in any event, is now provided for by the MRA — will therefore be excluded from the lists of services, other than where it is considered prudent to make some allowance for unplanned failures that must be dealt with on a responsive basis (as distinct from “newly arising need”).

- **Improvements** providing something new or upgrading what is already there (also known as ‘refurbishment’ or ‘modernisation’).

Backlog (i.e. ‘catch up’) repairs and major improvements are allowed for within the housing part of the Single Capital Pot allocation. No such works are included within this project’s definition of maintenance, even if required to bring a property up to the standard of a “decent home” or to improve its lettable.