Respond!, formed in 1982, is one of Ireland’s largest housing associations. We seek to create a positive future for people by alleviating poverty and creating vibrant, socially integrated communities. We provide a range of services from design and planning through to management and care. Respond! designs and constructs dwellings for traditional families, lone parent families, the elderly, homeless and other special need groups.

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1 Introduction

In this, the 25th year of the Respond! organisation, it is appropriate that we review our commitment to best practice estate management with the production and implementation of a detailed estate management strategy (EMS) for the period 2007-2012 and onwards.

The ultimate estate management objective is to ensure that Residents receive a level of service which is timely and professional and that as Landlord, Respond! delivers on the ethos of the organisation and the duty of care to our residents. The purpose of the Estate Management Strategy for both Respond! staff and residents is to ensure that the role of the Estate Officer and that of the resident is clearly set out.

The weekly letting contract is a legal document that sets out the basis of agreement between the tenant and Respond!. It is this document that is the first point of call where disputes arise.

This strategy is a precondition for and underpins the Community Development strategy that Respond! has produced earlier this year and which is currently being rolled out in all of our estates countrywide. Respond! stresses that its role as Landlord is defined in law and must accord to its letting agreements with its tenants. However, Respond! is concerned as a charitable organisation to offer support services beyond those mandated by the legal tenant/landlord relationship; this is the basis on which it sets out its community development objectives.

Some of the areas that the EM Strategy will cover include the following:-

- Allocations Policy and Plan
- Management
- Maintenance
- Financial Management
- Customer Satisfaction
- Ensuring Compliance and Accountability for both Staff and Tenants
- Administrative, IT and Support Systems.

Incorporated in the strategy is a process of review at different elements and a process of reporting in order to enable proper analysis of the success or otherwise of the implementation of the strategy.

The success of the EM strategy will be paramount to the delivery of coherent and effective Community Development operations. The professional delivery of the EM strategy and the adherence to quality requirements will ensure that our residents will receive the best practice Estate Management services that can be provided.

We will place at the heart of these services Customer Satisfaction and means by which this can be tested and improved. Regular feedback and participation in the review of our EM services will ensure that we are targeting both efficient and effective EM services.
2 Estate Management Strategic Aims & Objectives

This EM Strategy is based on a number of core aims and objectives, which are set out below. We will regularly review these Aims and Objectives to ensure that they are current and relevant to the modern delivery of best practice EM services.

This EM Strategy is based on the core principles of our Mission Statement which is set out below and we guarantee as a minimum that we will deliver on these Aims and Objectives as a minimum.

Mission Statement:
Respond’s motivation, as a non-profit Housing Association, and its mandate in law as a social landlord determine that it should seek to provide the best tenant services possible within the resources provided to it from tenants’ rents supplemented by government finances. Our aim is to provide professional, timely and the highest quality Estate Management (EM) services to all our residents in line with our legal requirements and in the furtherance of the Community Development ethos of the organisation.

Allocations and Assessments
Objective:
To comply with Respond’s policy of creating vibrant, integrated and self-reliant communities rather than estates which provide mere shelter or accommodation, careful consideration is given to the overall needs of the estate in question, i.e. generally favouring a community lettings policy where such can be legitimately implemented in reference to respective local authority standards. Single class, segregated estates which accommodate only or mostly low-income and poorly resourced families do not provide social environments in which any of the residents can be optimistic about achieving well-balanced and wholesome prospects for themselves or their children. As a charity which seeks to confront poverty and lack of resources and opportunities in such estates, Respond strives to create mixed communities of persons of varied ages and with varying levels of family income and educational attainments.

Management
Objective:
To create the vision of clean, well-managed estates where Residents feel safe and proud to live, Respond will ensure that our EM staff will be on site, reviewing repairs, maintenance, graffiti, litter and general upkeep of the estates on a regular basis. Respond will ensure that there is regular communication with Residents on EM matters and keep them informed of all issues which will impact on their homes.

Maintenance and repairs
Objective:
To ensure the long term sustainability of the housing units under Respond’s management, the Estate Management team shall provide proactive maintenance support to residents and estates. This includes regular site inspections to note any structural or major items of a property deteriorating nature, the cyclical maintenance of existing stock, maintenance of the Communal Facilities, ensuring that the focus is on peaceful enjoyment of homes on Estates. This includes the identification of any necessary reactive maintenance work to be carried out, as appropriate, by either the landlord or the tenant in an efficient and timely manner.

Financial Management
Objective:
To ensure that there is proper control by the organisation of financial and other assets to cover current and regular estate maintenance and management costs as well as any future major items of expenditure in conformity with this current estate management strategy.

Estate Management Staffing
Objective:
To recruit, train and deploy a complement of professional estate management staff to meet the best practice standards required under our estate management strategy. These staff will work regularly and closely with local tenant participation committees to ensure the peaceful enjoyment by all of the resources of our respective estates.
Ensuring Compliance

Objective:
To ensure that both Respond! and Residents adhere to the agreed best practice principles we will instigate a means of reporting on areas such as rent calculations, arrears management, maintenance completion and quality and resident satisfaction to ensure that compliance is maintained at the highest levels by both EM staff and Residents.

Resident Satisfaction

Objective:
To provide a friendly, accessible and efficient service to residents with a view to best practice on all aspects of customer liaison, whether by verbal, written or other means. To provide feedback on issues raised in a timely manner. To be open and forthcoming in dealings with customers and to provide a means of obtaining satisfaction ratings from customers on the services we provide.

Administrative, IT and Support Systems

Objective:
Respond! will provide sufficient professional support services to our front-line estate management staff to enable them to carry out all their functions to best practice standards.
3 Detailed Strategic Area

Allocations and Assessments

Relevant Policy and Procedures:
Tenant Letting Conditions – Family
Tenant Letting Conditions – Elderly
Assessment Protocols
Tenant Handbook 2007

Objective:
To comply with Respond!’s policy of creating vibrant, integrated and self-reliant communities rather than estates which provide mere shelter or accommodation, careful consideration is given to the overall needs of the estate in question, i.e. generally favouring a community lettings policy where such can be legitimately implemented in reference to respective local authority standards. Single class, segregated estates which accommodate only or mostly low-income and poorly resourced families do not provide social environments in which any of the residents can be optimistic about achieving well-balanced and wholesome prospects for themselves or their children. As a charity which seeks to confront poverty and lack of resources and opportunities in such estates, Respond! strives to create mixed communities of persons of varied ages and with varying levels of family income and educational attainments.

Delivery of this objective:
Nomination of Prospective Tenants

When a new scheme is being allocated, or when a re-let is available, the nomination of prospective tenants will be undertaken promptly in accordance with allocation agreements between Respond! and the respective Local Authorities. Local Authorities are invited to offer for assessment 3 prospective applicants for every vacancy.

On new schemes with first lets the EM Supervisor will seek a list of prospective tenants from the relevant Local Authority more than 6 months from date of handover. The EM Supervisor will meet with the design teams to ensure there is an appropriate flow of information on design and handover.

Application Process
On receipt of an application for a rental property Respond! will issue a response via letter within 5 working days to notify the prospective tenant of the process and time in which a definitive response will be issued.

Assessments
These are carried out in the prospective tenants’ homes, where appropriate. Respond! will pay attention to the housing needs of each applicant as well as to their likelihood of integration into the estate for which they are applying. An Assessment will be undertaken within 15 working days of application.

Allocations
On completion of the assessments and a review of the applicable properties, in accordance with the Assessments Policies of Respond!, a prospective allocation is made and notification given to the prospective resident. Notification will be made to the successful and unsuccessful applicants within 10 working days of the allocation process having been completed.

Pre-tenancy and Post move in courses
These take place in advance of allocating the property but after the assessment and confirmation that allocation will take place and subsequent to move-in. Each scheme is different but in general we anticipate 5 pre-tenancy meetings in advance (within 1 month of move in date) and at least 1 after move-in (within 1 month of move in). These courses are to be run and managed by EM Staff.
Casual Vacancies
All allocations for casual vacancies will be filled within 4 weeks of notification of vacancy. The process for filling these vacancies is as stated above.

Ethical Policy
Respond! has an inclusive and equality policy in respect of its allocations and persons/families of different religions, ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientation will be equally assessed in relation to the aforementioned policy. Where necessary interpreters will be used to facilitate the assessment process.

Reporting & Review:
Assessment teams to meet weekly.

A monthly report of the allocations and assessment work in the region will be provided for the Regional Manager. Ad hoc reports will also be given in the interim where problems are arising and a decision is required from the Regional Manager.

A monthly updated of the waiting list for the region to be provided to the Regional Manager.

There will be a bi-annual review of the Allocations and Assessments procedures and policies.
4 Management

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Tenant Handbook 2007
Anti Social Behaviour Policy
Good Neighbour Charter
Tenant Letting Conditions
Cash Handling Policy and Procedure

Objective:
To create the vision of clean, well-managed estates where Residents feel safe and proud to live. Respond! will ensure that our EM staff will be on site, reviewing repairs, maintenance, graffiti, litter and general upkeep of the estates on a regular basis. Respond! will ensure that there is regular communication with Residents on EM matters and keep them informed of all issues which will impact on their homes.

Delivery of this objective:
Estate Visits

All estates will be visited at least once a week and will be reviewed for excessive litter, graffiti, and visible maintenance issues.

100% of residents in each estate will receive a visit each week to discuss and review issues of ASB and any other security or safety concerns that may exist. This will be reviewed after 6 months.

Community Buildings

EM staff will visit each Community Building each week to ensure that it is being maintained in good condition and that the relevant services are being provided to it. All maintenance issues will be reported to the Maintenance Officers.

Letting Conditions

Each week EM staff will review the general estate appearance to ensure that Residents are complying with their letting conditions. Where necessary Residents will be notified verbally first and then in writing that they must comply with their letting conditions.

Good Neighbour Charter

EM staff will ensure that the conditions of the Good Neighbour Charter are being implemented and that regular visits of the elderly are being carried out as agreed. A monthly meeting with those involved in the Good Neighbour Charter will be held by EM Staff.

Estate Clinics

EM staff will hold a monthly estate clinic in the community building for the purposes of arrears management and maintenance reporting by Residents. These meetings are to be undertaken in conjunction with and not instead of the weekly estate visits and weekly visits to Residents’ homes.

Cash Collection

EM staff will collect, where offered by tenants, any cash payable in respect of rent arrears. Such cash collections will be subject to the Cash Handling Policies and Procedures issued by the Company Treasurer in 2006.

Reporting & Review:
Regional Managers to receive weekly report of visits undertaken by EM staff and issues raised in weekly meetings with Residents.
Regional Managers to receive a **weekly report** on cash collected on estate visits.

Quarterly review by Finance Department of cash handling procedures on a random visit basis.

Summary report on a **monthly basis** of issues of ASB, graffiti, excessive litter, and maintenance issues to be prepared for both the Regional Manager and Senior Management Team.

**Quarterly review and report** of use of Community Buildings to be provided to Regional Manager and Senior Management Team.

**Annual review and report**, in conjunction with **Tenant Participation Committee**, of services and uses of Community Buildings to be provided to Regional Manager and Senior Management Team.

EM staff are to record notes of all visits to Residents and to present those notes to the Admin staff for writing up and analysis on a **Monday morning**. Regional Managers will review these reports on a **weekly basis**. A proforma notebook with Resident receipt is to be provided for this purpose. This will become part of the mobile IT systems in time.
5 Maintenance and Repairs

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Tenant Handbook 2007
Letting Conditions
Repairs and Maintenance Handbook
Cyclical and Planned Maintenance Programme

Objective:
To ensure the long term sustainability of the housing units under Respond’s management, the Estate Management team shall provide proactive maintenance support to residents and estates. This includes regular site inspections to note any structural or major items of a property deteriorating nature, the cyclical maintenance of existing stock, maintenance of the Communal Facilities, ensuring that the focus is on peaceful enjoyment of homes on Estates. This includes the identification of any necessary reactive maintenance work to be carried out, as appropriate, by either the landlord or the tenant in an efficient and timely manner.

Delivery of this objective:
Planned/Cyclical Maintenance Programme

The planned and cyclical maintenance programme is dictated by the age of the stock units. The programme of planned maintenance and cyclical maintenance is to be carried out as per that plan.

The cyclical plan will be reviewed annually and updated based on property inspections.

The planned maintenance programme will be reviewed every 2 years based on the reactive repair spend and the cyclical maintenance programme.

The National Stock Manager will liaise with regional Maintenance Officers to draw up a planned and cyclical maintenance programme and report this in March each year for inclusion in the following year's budgets.

Regional Managers will be responsible for the delivery of the planned and cyclical maintenance programmes each year and will report quarterly on progress against the targets.

The programme per estate will, after consultation with the residents, be issued to them in the annual report.

EM staff will carry out 100% stock inspection each year. This is to tie in with estate visits. This will enable the Maintenance Officers and National Stock Manager to build up an accurate picture of the current state of our houses and community buildings.

Reactive Maintenance Regime
The following timescales will be used for the completion of reactive repairs:

- Emergency repairs response within 24 hours
- Urgent repairs within 72 hours
- Routine repairs within 21 days

All repairs reported will be acknowledged by EM staff within 24 hours.

All contractors are to offer an appointment to Residents within the above timescales.

All repair requests below €100 may be approved by the Maintenance Officer.

All repair requests between €101 and €1,000 must be approved in advance by the Regional Manager.

All repair requests above €1,001 must be approved by the National Stock Manager.
All repairs and maintenance works are to be entered on the National Maintenance system – Maint+. Maintenance Officers are to inspect all repair requests where the likely estimate is over €1,000 and at least 20% of those under €1,000.

Maintenance of communal facilities
The maintenance of the building structure and surrounding areas is the remit of the EM staff. Any programmes or income generating schemes in the Communal Facility will have to contribute to the cost of maintenance of the building.

Planned Maintenance of the Communal Buildings plus Reactive Maintenance of the buildings is the responsibility of the EM staff.

Together with the CDO, maximisation of funding for capital works from 3rd party agencies can be instrumental in upgrading the building for the betterment of services being provided for our tenants.

National Stock Management
The National Stock Manager is responsible for programming the cyclical maintenance and 10, 25, 50-year replacement of items included in the Programmed Budget. The National Stock Manager has responsibility for the monitoring of costs in accordance with the approved budget.

Void Maintenance
Once a void is reported, EM staff are expected to have the property re-occupied within a 4-week period. Void repairs to be carried out within 2 weeks of notification of void.

Under the new visiting regime abandoned properties should be more quickly recognised.

The National Stock Manager is to set up a standard void works schedule with estimate costs. All voids to be returned to a lettable condition as approved by the National Stock Manager.

All void costs to be agreed with the National Stock Manager prior to their commitment.

Reporting & Review:
EM staff to prepare monthly void reports.

National Stock Manager to prepare summary reactive repair, cyclical and programmed maintenance reports outlining the ongoing cost of such repairs/programmes and the major components of those areas on a quarterly basis.

National Stock Manager to provide reports on quarterly basis of target timescales for repairs completed and a quality report on work carried out.

Adhoc reports on significant maintenance/insurance issues to be completed by Regional Managers.

Annual Cyclical Maintenance review report to be produced by the National Stock Manager

Annual report on planned maintenance programme to be prepared by National Stock Manager.

Quarterly report to tenants to be prepared by Regional Managers and Maintenance Officers on repairs carried out on estates and future programme of maintenance.
6  Financial Management

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Tenant Handbook
Letting Conditions
Repairs and Maintenance Handbook
Differential Rent Calculation
Rent Arrears Administration Process
Management Accounts
Rent+ reports

Objective:

To ensure that there is proper control by the organisation of financial and other assets to cover current and regular estate maintenance and management costs as well as any future major items of expenditure in conformity with this current estate management strategy.

Delivery of this objective:

As a precondition of its approval as a housing association Respond! undertakes to let its social rental housing to those in most need economically and socially. The rents, determined according to statutory formulae, are defined so as to take account of the affordability potential of the tenants: all the rents, accordingly, are within the financial capability of the tenants, provided they do not fall into arrears.

Respond! has added a further dimension to the statutory terms for the benefit of the tenant whose income may have improved in time: a capped rent.

Setting of Rent

Respond! sets the Family (under the CLSS scheme) rent annually based on the differential rent calculation and inflationary rise in the capped rent. Rent changes effective from 1 July each year.

The differential rent calculation €12.50 weekly plus 20% of the net household income above €102 per week.

We are required to obtain proof of income for the previous year. These documents are crucial to ensuring that the correct rent is charged. Letters requesting these income details are issued to the residents by 15 March.

CAS rents are set annually and are effective 1 July each year.

CAS rents are determined by the economic cost of running and estate and set of properties. All CAS rents are to be agreed with the Company Treasurer before they are issued to tenants.

Collection of Rents

Rent is collected using swipe cards, standing orders, cheques, cash and money orders. The priority for all EM staff is to ensure that Residents are using the swipe cards for payments of rents.

Other methods, such as MABS, Household Budget, Standing Orders are allowed but these can lead to delays in posting the rent to the correct account and incorrect statements.

Residents to be reminded to keep receipts of payments.

Rents are set by Respond! according to an approved government formula which takes due account of the ability of the tenant to pay: a differential rent. This rent is well within the financial capacity of all our tenants, no matter how low their income may be – it does take full account of such low incomes. Furthermore, Respond! has itself introduced a ‘capping’ system which ensures that tenants whose incomes increase are not euro-for-euro penalised by the formula. Accordingly, it is a disservice to any of our tenants to allow them to slip into excessive arrears, which may frustrate their efforts to get back to a more regular and economic paying pattern. This is why Respond! operates a Zero
Tolerance system in relation to rent arrears. **Zero tolerance** on rent arrears is now expected on all estates. EM staff, through their weekly visits to tenants are to ensure that all Residents are aware of this policy.

Rent may be collected by EM staff on weekly visits to estates. All cash/cheques collected in this way will be subject to the Cash Handling Policy and Procedures as issued by the Company Treasurer in 2006.

**Rent Default and Arrears**
EM staff are responsible for their Estate Arrears and systems and processes are in place to ensure that the percentage of arrears is as low as possible.

**Intervention** by an EM staff member should occur when a resident is showing 2 weeks in arrears.

The deadline for receipt of income documentation is **1 June annually**. Non-supply of these documents will be classified as a breach of letting and could result in legal process being pursued.

Strict adherence to the arrears process is expected from each Officer. The 7-day notices and NTQ's have to be kept up to date and on file including all the relevant paper work.

In exceptional circumstances arrears are reviewed in light of an individual's circumstances but as the rent is calculated based on net income there is no reason why arrears should be accruing.

Respond! will pursue outstanding arrears through **the Courts**.

Respond!'s key area for arrears prevention is in **early intervention**. The use of MAB's and Household Budget should be notified to the tenant where **2 weeks of arrears** is evident.

There will be a reduction in annual arrears percentage for those who have provided income documentation from a current level to **2-3% over the coming 12 months**.

There will be a reduction in annual arrears percentage for those who have not provided income documentation from a current level to **2% over the coming 12 months**.

**Zero tolerance** in relation to arrears on all new estates

Residents to receive **quarterly rent statements**.

**Government Financial Contributions**
Annually the Management and Maintenance subsidy for CLS units is submitted to the Local Authorities in March of each year.

**Reporting & Review:**
EM Teams to meet **weekly** to discuss arrears actions.

Regional Managers to receive a **weekly report** of all cash collected by EM staff on weekly estate visits.

**Fortnightly** meeting of Regional Manager and EM Supervisor to discuss the action being taken on estates to reduce arrears.

**Weekly arrears** movements and outstanding balances to be provided to Regional Manager and Senior Management Team.

**Weekly updates** on NTQ and 7 day notices issued and progressed.

**Weekly arrears** visit schedule to be submitted to Regional Manager by EM staff.
7  Estate Management Staff

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Staff Policy and Procedures Handbook
Training manual
Salary Scales

Objective:
To recruit, retain, train and deploy a complement of professional estate management staff to meet the best practice standards required under our estate management strategy. These staff will work regularly and closely with Residents and local tenant participation committees to ensure the peaceable enjoyment by all of the resources of our respective estates and the compliance of the letting agreements in place.

Delivery of this objective:
Recruitment, retention and training of Staff

The recruitment of Estate Officers to fulfill the implementation of the strategy will be done where the resources are needed. It is anticipated that we will have the following ratio of Estate Management personnel to housing units:

- Urban centres up to 400 units per staff member;
- Rural areas up to 300 units per staff member;
- Admin Support 1 Admin support per regional office.

EM staff will attend in house and external courses to improve their learning and be more effective on Estates.

As a general guide there will be a minimum of 6 training days per year but it could be more depending on the need.

Training will cover property management and inspections, client awareness, conflict resolution, arrears management, drugs awareness and other relevant courses.

Deployment
The purpose of deployment is to achieve maximum contact with our Residents and therefore greater engagement with Respond!. This will enable Respond! to gain a greater understanding of our client base which in turn will lead to better service provision on estates.

The estates will be arranged in clusters to avoid excessive travel time between estates and to maximise estate presence.

Each estate is to be visited weekly, each tenant is to be contacted and reports of the impact, conversations and file notes are to be taken. These are to be analyzed and summarized for Management by the supporting admin staff. The notes provision on Rent+ is to be used to facilitate this.

It is expected that staff spend 80% of their time on estates and 20% on administration.

Each Monday EM staff will report to their respective Regional Office for briefing of the weeks work and to undertake any necessary training that is required or arranged. Monday is also to be used to ensure that all necessary administration is carried out.

Staff Supports
Respond! will ensure that the EM staff have adequate training and are given the appropriate tools to carry out their job to the best of their ability. Respond! will use innovation in technology.
Respond! will provide mobile office functionality to reduce the reliance on paper system. Respond! will introduce mobile rent accounting and maintenance functionality by December 2007. Training and use of the system will be carried out in January 2008 and the systems will be functioning and in use on estates by February 2008.

**Reporting, Accountability, Work Targets and Appraisals.**

Respond! will introduce a programme of staff appraisals and performance reviews over the 3-month period ending November 2007. This will be linked to the new HR+ system being implemented.

There will be 6 monthly reviews of performance against targets.

All staff will, with their relevant line manager, set performance targets based on this strategy and the operational needs of the organisation. This will be done in May of each year and will be subject to review formally twice a year and informally twice a year.

Respond! will introduce a time sheet system in June 2008 for all CD and EM staff and this will be linked to HR+.

All EM staff are to use Microsoft Outlook to record their planned visits and estate clinics and to set up their relevant tasks on the tasks element of Microsoft Outlook.

Regional Managers will review on a random basis the weekly schedules of EM staff and review all actions arising from that schedule.

EM staff are to record notes of all visits to Residents and to present those notes to the Admin staff for writing up and analysis on a Monday morning. Regional Managers will review these reports on a weekly basis. A proforma notebook with Resident receipt is to be provided for this purpose. This will become part of the mobile IT systems in time.

Line managers are to set targets annually, in discussion with EM staff, that ensure delivery of the EM Strategy requirements. These targets are to be reviewed monthly by Regional Managers to ensure delivery.

**Reporting & Review:**

EM Teams to meet weekly on a Monday to discuss arrears action, maintenance issues, ASB issues, training issues, problem solving etc.

EM staff and Community Development Officers to meet fortnightly to discuss relevant issues on estates and future planning

**Fortnightly meeting** of Regional Manager and Estate Management Supervisor to discuss the action being taken on estates.

Regional Managers to provide Senior Management Team with a monthly report on EM issues including arrears management, letting and allocations issues, Maintenance issues and ASB issues. Adhoc reports required where exceptional issues arise that require Senior Management Team consideration.

Regional Managers to carry out monthly reviews of targets.

Line Managers to carry out appraisals on a quarterly basis – 2 formal and 2 informal.
8 Customer Satisfaction

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Tenant Handbook 2007  
Antisocial Behaviour Policy  
Repairs and Maintenance Handbook  
Good Neighbour Charter

Objective:
To provide a friendly, accessible and efficient service to residents with a view to best practice on all aspects of customer liaison, whether by verbal, written or other means. To provide feedback on issues raised in a timely manner. To be open and forthcoming in dealings with customers and to provide a means of obtaining satisfaction ratings from customers on the services we provide.

Delivery of this objective:
Informing Tenants:

Tenant communication will take place through the following means:

- New Tenant Handbook to be issued to all residents
- Weekly house visits by Estate Officers at the outset of the EM Strategy
- Weekly Estate Clinics where required.
- Annual Estate Report detailing summarising the events of the year for that estate and a look forward to the next year. This will include costs and income of the estate and a summary of the maintenance programme undertaken and planned for that estate including a schedule of the key dates for meetings and planned maintenance.

Respond! will make available a computer in all Community Buildings so that Residents can utilize the computers to contact Respond! online. The target for achievement of this nationwide is June 2009 with a programme roll out from September 2007.

Complaints procedure and response
Respond has a centralized complaints officer, independent of the Estate Management function.

A register of complaints will be maintained by each Regional Manager and a monthly report of statistics will be provided to the Senior Management Team by Regional Managers.

All complaints will be recorded and timelines for action and replies will be given to the tenant.

Complaints may be written, or verbal and will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

All complaints will be investigated within 20 working days and a brief summary report made to the complainant with 30 working days where possible. Any complaint not resolved within 30 working days will be escalated to the Regional Manager.

Any complaint not resolved within 60 working days will be escalated to the Managing Director for resolution.

All complainants will receive notification that the complaint has been escalated within 5 working days of the escalation.
Commitment to Tenants
The EM staff will meet the following standards:

- Replies to letters within 5 working days
- Reply to telephone calls within 48 hours
- Designated number to contact your Estate Officer
- Rent statements to issue quarterly

Measuring Satisfaction
Respond! will undertake an annual, random sample study, of Residents’ satisfaction. A minimum of 33% of Residents will be sampled each year to measure satisfaction over a given range of items including, rent levels, property maintenance, property condition, service delivery, information and communication and other areas determined by the Senior Management Team. This work will be undertaken by the R & D team.

Respond! will use a mystery shopper service to test our front line services and the ability of our EM staff to deliver on their requirements. A specific consultant will be engaged to help deliver this service and will be linked to Community Development activity.

Both of these services will be developed and run through our Research and Development Team reporting to the Managing Director.

Resident satisfaction with our maintenance contractors and maintenance service to be carried out on all maintenance issues. This is to be achieved by giving a postage paid reply slip to all residents who use our services with a request for reply. Results to be compiled quarterly and conveyed to Regional Managers, Senior Management Team and relevant contractors.

Reporting & Review:
Monthly report on complaints received, closed and under review, including analysis of complaint types. Learned outcomes to be relayed to staff on a monthly basis.

Annual Customer Satisfaction survey to be undertaken.

Mystery Shopper service e to report twice a year on a regional basis.

Quarterly maintenance service satisfaction rating report to Regional Managers, Senior Management Team and contractors.
9 Ensuring Compliance

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

Tenant Handbook 2007
Tenant Letting Conditions
Anti Social Behaviour Policy
Repairs and Maintenance Booklet
Rent Arrears Administration Process
Good Neighbour Charter

Objective:
To ensure that both Respond! and Residents adhere to the agreed best practice principles we will instigate a means of reporting on areas such as rent calculations, arrears management, maintenance completion and quality and resident satisfaction to ensure that compliance is maintained at the highest levels by both EM staff and Residents.

Delivery of this objective:
Respond! will set achievable targets for staff and residents in respect of all critical EM areas of service. As set out above these will be set annually and monitored monthly to ensure delivery.

Reporting on all targets and outcome will include analysis of successes as well as failures. A programme of learning will be built up from this report.

Respond! will issue an Estate Report annually to provide details of the work done and expected work in the upcoming year. This will allow Residents and third parties to monitor progress on their estates.

Enforcing maintenance standards

It will be the remit of the National Stock Manager and the Regional Managers to ensure that the cost control and the maintenance standards are kept at a high level.

Quarterly reports will be prepared by the National Stock Manager for the Senior Management Team to monitor the financial costs and qualitative delivery of our maintenance service.

A national programme of inspections by the National Stock Manager will be put in place and agreed with the Senior Management Team to enable the National Stock Manager to monitor the level of work on estates and the physical quality of our houses and apartments.

Rent and Arrears controls

Arrears management by the EM staff will be monitored by the EM Supervisors and Finance. EM staff will report monthly to the Regional Managers on the progress of arrears reduction programmes (as set out above).

Arrears will reduce by at least 2% per annum, nationally. The administration of arrears, reminder letters, 7 day notices and NTQ’s will be documented and followed up on a weekly basis by the EM staff.

Regional Managers will report monthly to the Senior Management Team on arrears action plans for estates. These plans will focus on the 10 highest arrears cases in each estate first and seek to reduce the level of arrears in these cases by 50% in the first 12 months of this strategy.

Regional Managers will provide an annual arrears action plan for the next 5 years on arrears reduction.
Notice to Quit (NTQ)
All NTQ's have to be notified to the Legal Department prior to issue. EM staff must document all NTQ details. Any income received after an NTQ has been issued must be returned to the relevant Resident with an explanation of the process.

Eviction
Eviction will be used only as a last resort.

To obtain a successful eviction a clear and continuous file of documentation must be kept. All actions, such as advice and the use of other agencies (MABS, Household Budget) and payment agreements must be maintained.

The EM staff and the legal department to ensure that any case for eviction is actionable.

Anti-social behaviour procedures
Respond! has an Anti Social Behaviour Policy.

Respond! will not tolerate any ASB, as defined in its Policy.

Respond! will help Residents in any way possible to take action to ensure that their lives are not blighted as a result of ASB. This will include mediation, legal action and eviction where necessary.

Where Tenants are willing to come forward and report incidents we will take positive action.

Respond! will also liaise with the relevant 3rd party bodies, e.g. The Gardai etc., to ensure that the case is dealt with in a prompt manner.

Respond! will only seek an Anti Social Behaviour Order where it believes that this is necessary and usually only as an action of last resort.

Reporting & Review:
Monthly reports to Senior Management Team by the National Stock Manager on costs and qualitative nature of repair service.

Monthly report by Regional Managers on arrears actions.

Annual arrears action plans for each estate.

Monthly report on NTQ's issued and actioned

Monthly report on ASB issues to be prepared by Regional Managers for Senior Management Team.

Annual Residents report, by estate, setting out repairs and maintenance programmes and issues and any other compliance matters.
10 Administrative, IT and Support Systems

Relevant Policy and Procedures:

- Anti Social Behaviour Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Booklet
- Rent Arrears Administration Process
- Assessment Protocols
- IT Strategy

Objective:
Respond! will provide sufficient professional support services to our front-line estate management staff to enable them to carry out all their functions to best practice standards.

Delivery of this objective:

Administrative support

Support to the front line EM staff will be provided by a dedicated Administrator in each Regional Office. This individual will support up to 4 EM staff working on estates.

The Admin support will ensure that all documentation is filed and that all correspondence is sent to residents within the required time scales set out above.

The Admin support will ensure that all processing of arrears action letters and notices is undertaken in a timely and efficient manner.

The Admin support will prepare necessary, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports for consideration by EM staff and Regional Managers.

Admin support will ensure that all Resident contacts are recorded and analysed each week and that relevant information is shared within the EM team they work.

The Admin support will provide any adhoc reports as requested by the EM staff and the Regional Managers in respect of arrears, NTQ’s, maintenance or other areas.

The Admin staff will support the EM staff and the legal department in the preparation of documentation and files for all ASB and arrears cases.

IT Support

IT support will be provided by way of Helpdesk facilities accessed either on-line or by telephone.

Any issue that cannot be resolved on-line or by telephone will be supported on site by a relevant IT assistant.

All front line IT requests will be dealt with within 72 hours.
IT will provide mobile office technology by June 2008 to all front line EM staff.

An effective IT rent accounting and maintenance system will be in place by December 2007.

IT training will take place at the launch of any new system and there will be 2 Microsoft Office update sessions (no more than half a day) in each year.

Any IT training request will be supported on an individual or on a group basis as considered necessary.
Finance Support
The Finance Team will produce **quarterly rent statements, 1 week after the quarter end** (April, July, October, January). These will be dispatched by the Finance Team.

Rent payments will be up loaded on a **weekly basis** initially, by the Wednesday of the relevant week. Notification of upload will be sent to all EM Staff.

**Daily up load** of payments will be processed as of **1 January 2008**. No notification will be sent at this time.

Rent will be charged from the **Monday of each week** on all Resident rent accounts.

Refunds of deposits will be made on the **last Friday of each month** where a deposit is to be repaid.

Maintenance reports will be made available **on line** to the National Stock Manager and Maintenance Officers on a **weekly and monthly basis**.

The Finance Team will monitor and report on **monthly arrears figures** to the Senior Management Team. They will not report on action plans or action taken.

Rent accounts will be reviewed by the Finance Team on a **weekly basis** to ensure that all relevant transactions have been processed and that accounts reflect the most up to date position for each tenant.

Finance, working with EM staff will seek to **reduce and eliminate any Rent Suspense account balances** over a period of 6 months and to clear all figures transferred to suspense within **2 weeks from 1 January 2008**.

A **quarterly meeting** will be held with Finance and EM Supervisors to ensure that the most efficient processes and systems are being developed and deployed.
## 11 Summary of Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Area</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allocations and Assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations</td>
<td>Interview number of applicants per unit</td>
<td>3 per unit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek Local Authority listing</td>
<td>More than 6 months from handover date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>Application acknowledgement</td>
<td>Within 5 working days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Interviews to be carried out</td>
<td>Within 15 working days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allocations</td>
<td>Notification of successful or unsuccessful application</td>
<td>Within 10 days of decision</td>
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<td>Notification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre/Post tenancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre Tenancy courses</td>
<td>Number of meetings to be held</td>
<td>Minimum of 5 meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Timescales for meetings</td>
<td>To commence at least 1 month from handover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casual Vacancies</td>
<td>Period of time in which to fill</td>
<td>4 weeks from notification of void.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
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<td>Assessment team meetings</td>
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<td>Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allocations and assessments reports</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Regional waiting list</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocations and Assessments Policy and procedure review</td>
<td></td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Estate Visits</strong></td>
<td>Number of visits</td>
<td>One per week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Number of Residents to be visited each week</td>
<td>At least 50% to be contacted</td>
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<td><strong>Community Buildings</strong></td>
<td>Visits to Community Buildings</td>
<td>Each week</td>
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<td><strong>Letting Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Review all properties (visual inspection)</td>
<td>Each week</td>
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<td><strong>Good Neighbour Charter</strong></td>
<td>Meeting with residents involved</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td><strong>Estate Clinics</strong></td>
<td>To be held in Community Buildings</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td><strong>Reporting</strong></td>
<td>Visit schedule to Regional Manager</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Visit and issues report to RM</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Summary estate report</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community Building usage report</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TPC report and review</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maintenance and repairs</strong></td>
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<td>Maintenance and repairs</td>
<td>Set up of cyclical programme</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planned Programme review</td>
<td>Every 2 years</td>
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<td>Costed plans for cyclical and planned programmes</td>
<td>Annually in March each year</td>
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<td>Progress reports on programmes</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td>Residents’ report on programmes</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<td>Stock inspections</td>
<td>100% each year</td>
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<td><strong>Reactive repairs</strong></td>
<td>Response times for:</td>
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<td>Emergency</td>
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<td>24 Hours</td>
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<td>Routine</td>
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<td>21 Days</td>
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<td>MO approval</td>
<td>Repair cost &lt; €100</td>
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<td>Regional Manager approval</td>
<td>Repair cost €101 &lt; x &lt; €1,000</td>
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<td>National Stock Manager approval</td>
<td>Repair cost ≥ €1001</td>
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<td>Pre-inspection of repair requests</td>
<td>All ≥ €1,001 and 20% &lt; €1,000.</td>
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<td><strong>Community Facilities</strong></td>
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<td>As per above</td>
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<td><strong>National Stock Management</strong></td>
<td>Programme of planned maintenance</td>
<td>Reviewed every 2 years</td>
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<td>for 5, 10, 20 and 50 years</td>
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<td><strong>Void Maintenance</strong></td>
<td>Turn around period</td>
<td>2 weeks from notification of void</td>
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<td>Schedule of standard void works</td>
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<td>Void report</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Summary Maintenance report</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cyclical Maintenance review report</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<td>Planned maintenance review report</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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<td>Estate Communication on Maintenance</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td>Target Area</td>
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<td><strong>Financial Management</strong></td>
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<td>Setting of rents</td>
<td>CLSS and CAS rent increases</td>
<td>Annually from 1 July</td>
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<td>Notification for Income</td>
<td>15 March each year</td>
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<td>Documentation</td>
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<td>Agreement on all rents from Company Treasurer</td>
<td>As needed</td>
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<td>Collection of rents</td>
<td>Method preferred</td>
<td>Swipe Card</td>
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<td>Rent collection on new estates</td>
<td>Zero tolerance</td>
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<td>Receipts reminder</td>
<td>On each quarterly statement</td>
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<td>Arrears intervention</td>
<td><strong>2 weeks from first arrears date</strong></td>
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<td>Documentation receipt</td>
<td>1 June each year</td>
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<td>Reduction in arrears</td>
<td>2 to 3% in next 12 months</td>
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<td>Income Documentation arrears</td>
<td>Reduce by 2% in next 12 months</td>
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<td>EM Team meeting on arrears</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>EM Supervisor and Regional Manager meeting</td>
<td>Every 2 weeks</td>
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<td>Arrears report</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>NTQ/7 Day notice report to Regional Manager</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Arrears visits to high arrears offenders</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EM Staff</strong></td>
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<td>Recruitment, retention and training</td>
<td>Ration of staff to number of units:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>400 units per staff member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>300 units per staff member</td>
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<td>Admin support</td>
<td>1 per 4 EM staff</td>
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<td>Training per year</td>
<td>Minimum of 6 days per year</td>
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<td><strong>Deployment</strong></td>
<td>Object of deployment</td>
<td>Achieve maximum contact with Residents</td>
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<td>Nature of deployment</td>
<td>In estate clusters</td>
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<td>Time on estates</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time on Administration/Training</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Admin day</td>
<td>Monday of each week</td>
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<td><strong>Reporting</strong></td>
<td>Review of targets</td>
<td>Every 6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting of targets</td>
<td>May each year</td>
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<td>Weekly time sheets</td>
<td>June 2008</td>
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<td>Use of Microsoft Outlook Calander</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>Schedule review by Regional Manager</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Use of proforma notebook/review by Regional Manager</td>
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<td>Review of targets by Regional Managers</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>CD and EM staff meeting</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
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<td>Regional Manager report to smt</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<td><strong>Customer Satisfaction</strong></td>
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<td>Estate report by Regional Manager</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<td>Computer in all Community</td>
<td>By June 2009</td>
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<td>Buildings</td>
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<td>Complaints register</td>
<td>By December 2007</td>
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<td>Complaints report by Regional</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Managers</td>
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<td>Complaints acknowledged</td>
<td>Within 5 working days</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complaints investigated</td>
<td>Within 20 working days</td>
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<td>Summary Complaint report</td>
<td>Within 30 working days</td>
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<td>Unresolved complaint escalated to</td>
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<td>Regional Manager</td>
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<td>Unresolved complaint escalated to</td>
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<td>Managing Director</td>
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<td>Complaints report from Regional</td>
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<td>Managers</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Customer Satisfaction survey by R</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&amp; D team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mystery Shopper review</td>
<td>Twice a year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance service satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
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<td>report by Regional Managers</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td><strong>Target Area Description</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ensuring Compliance</strong></td>
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<td>Report on quality control and costs by National Stock Manager</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<td>Finance to monitor arrears</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Arrears reduction programme report to Regional Managers by EM staff</td>
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<td>Arrears reduction programme report to Regional Managers by EM staff</td>
<td>2% per annum</td>
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<td>Regional Manager report to Senior Management Team on arrears</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
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<td>Arrears action plan from Regional Managers to smt</td>
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<td>Anti Social Behaviour</td>
<td>Report by Regional Managers to Senior Management Team</td>
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<td>Customer Satisfaction survey by R &amp; D team</td>
<td>Annual</td>
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<td>Target Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Target</td>
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<td><strong>Admin, IT and Support Systems</strong></td>
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<td>Admin</td>
<td>1 Admin support</td>
<td>Per 4 EM staff</td>
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<td>All documents to be filed</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All residents contacts to be recorded and analysed.</td>
<td>Weekly 100%</td>
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<td><strong>IT Support</strong></td>
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<td>All front line requests dealt with.</td>
<td>Within 72 hours</td>
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<td>Mobile office technology provided</td>
<td>By June 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effective Rent accounting system</td>
<td>By December 2007</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Microsoft Office update session</td>
<td>2 per year</td>
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<td><strong>Finance Support</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quarterly rent statements</td>
<td>1 week after quarter end</td>
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<td>Rent payments uploaded</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mystery Shopper review</td>
<td>Twice a year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rent payments uploaded daily</td>
<td>By 1 January 2008</td>
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<td>Rents charged</td>
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<td>Refund of deposits</td>
<td>Last Friday of each month</td>
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<td>On line maintenance reports</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review of rent accounts</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduce rent suspense</td>
<td>Over 6 months</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clear rent suspense thereafter</td>
<td>Within 2 weeks</td>
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<td>Finance EM meeting</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
12 APPENDIX

ESTATE OFFICER WEEKLY PROGRAMME

1. Introduction
The objectives of this deployment template are to ensure better customer service, better use of available resources, enhanced information flows between Estate Management, Community Development and Family Resource and to give Estate Officer a clear direction of what is required of them under the new Estate Management Strategy.

2. Functions
Estate Management main functions include:

- Arrears Control
- Enforcement of Instalment Agreement
- Maintenance Repairs (Planned and Reactive)
- Void Inspections
- Signing up new tenants
- Environmental Programmes
- Management of Community Areas
- Maintenance of Community Buildings
- Pre-tenancy Programme Delivery
- Reducing vandalism and graffiti
- House inspections
- Identifying neglect – families in need of support
- General tenancy support

3. Cluster
Sample Cluster – Kilkenny /Tipperary

Please Note: This Sample and the following Deployment chart will need to be interpreted and applied appropriately in each region, taking account of the particularities that may obtain. However, it is essential, over the next six months, that all residents in every region are visited by one of our Estate Officers every week and the visits duly recorded as set out hereinafter. At the end of this period there will be a review of the process.

10 Estates – 248 units

Tipperary
Group 1
Commeragh Court 17
Francis Court 2
Oakland Drive 38
Ardlinnan 32

89

Group 2
Killinaule 18
Cahir 17
Fethard 19

54

Kilkenny
Millenium Court 46
O’Loughlin Court 46
Goresbride 13

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4. Deployment

Monday – Office – Planning Programme

Tuesday – Tipperary – Group 1 Estates

Wednesday – Tipperary – Morning: Group 2 Estates
Afternoon: Focus on arrears control, or particular estate management programmes

Thursday – Kilkenny Estates

Fridays – Forward Planning for existing and new estates
- Take any TOIL (time off in lieu) due
- Attend meetings with Local Authorities, Third Parties and attend bi monthly Liaison Meeting with opposite number in Community Development/Family Resources etc.

5. Outcomes

Each Estate Officer will carry out a Recording Register (duplicate book) to record:
- Complaints
- Repair queries
- Contact from unanswered calls
- To note areas of concern & follow up
- Record incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Receipts for payments of rent/arrears
- House or estate maintenance issues

Record Book will provide the basis for a weekly review by line Manager.

Record book and visits will also act as:

1) A resource of information for Community Development and Family Resource Officers
2) Focus Service Provision
3) Improve Management of Estates and increase support for tenants
4) Provide better flow of information between sections
5) Increase tenant satisfaction
6) Increase tenant inclusion
7) Improve personal and professional relationship between tenant and Estate Officer