



Quality & service | It's in our DNA

Window & Door Maintenance

# RESIDENT CARE & VALUE FOR MONEY

Window & Door Safety Checks in  
Residential Care Sector

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## WHO WE ARE

Mila Window and Door Maintenance has completed over 1.1 million repairs in the social housing sector over its 30 years of continuous trading. Our business is very simple – we deliver a wide range of value for money repair and maintenance solutions for windows and doors across all kinds of social housing stock. We also offer a limited window and door replacement service for clients and a Fire Door installation service.

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## RESIDENTIAL ELDERLY CARE: A COMPLEX CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

The Challenges for Asset Managers in the Residential Elderly Care (REC) Sector are many and complex.

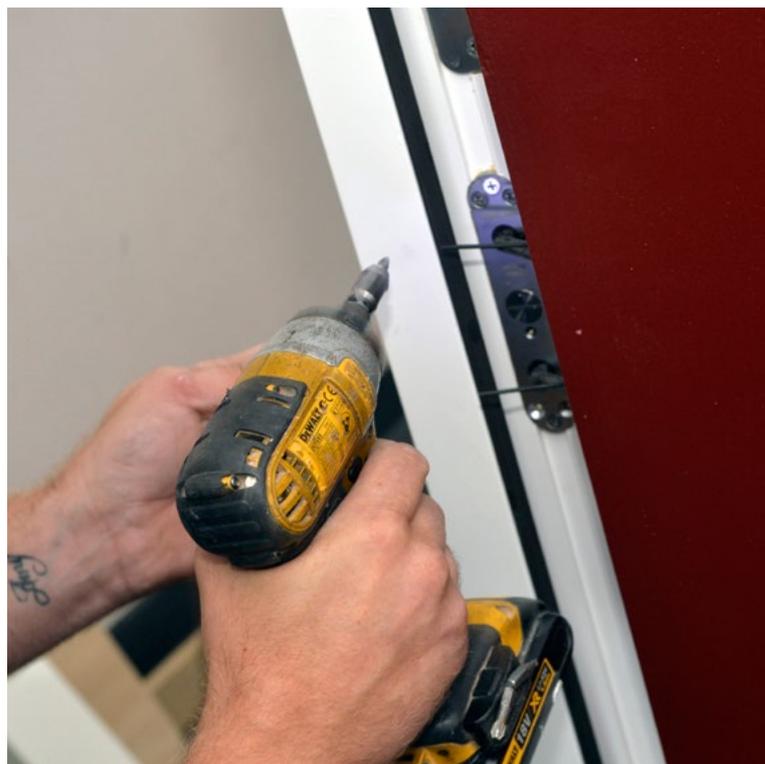
Competition in the sector is encouraged as a means of increasing efficiency, driving down prices and raising quality. Choice is promoted to meet user expectations of healthcare and to improve service provision. Currently there is an overcapacity of around 10% of beds meaning fierce competition for residents with the quality of accommodation a deciding factor for many future residents and their families.

The profitability of the care homes sector continues to be under downward pressure. Wages are the major cost driver for the sector typically representing 60% of revenues. These costs will continue to rise with improvements to the national living wage.

- Providing an environment for residents that is safe, caring, effective and responsive to their needs.

- Ensuring the consistent high quality of residences, sometimes on a national basis, often across large geographic areas covering numerous local authority areas.

- Providing support for frontline care staff in terms of the suitability of building design and the availability of specialist equipment and resources. The Royal College of Nurses report into 'Persistent Challenges to providing Quality Care' identified that 26% of their members felt that they didn't have access to adequate equipment and medical supplies needed to care for residents.



- Heightened Media & Public Interest into the quality of care homes following negative investigations into failing care homes and the failure of the Southern Cross Group business model.

- Higher expectations from residents who are increasingly self-funding.

- Shortages of care assistants and registered nurses mean increased demands on people working in the sector. Reporting minor repairs and sourcing contractors adds to their burden and leads to reactive repairs model which is high cost and ineffective for residents.

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Property costs have risen above inflation in recent years due to energy price rises, insurance costs and increased repair and maintenance costs.

With the exception of repair and maintenance costs, the costs listed above are difficult to influence and reduce.

# HEALTH & SAFETY RISKS: IMPORTANCE OF WINDOW MAINTENANCE

The Health and Safety Executive provide a useful document called Health & Safety in Care Homes, they say *“Social care is about people – a large, diverse workforce looking after a predominantly vulnerable population. Employees have the right to work in a healthy and safe workplace, while residents should receive care that is safe, and takes their needs, freedoms and dignity into account.”*

To help you determine if you are doing enough to manage health and safety, they ask you to consider the following questions:

- Are your arrangements to control the real risks people are facing working?
- How well do you know what is happening in the home – are there effective checks in place?
- Have you learned from situations where things have gone wrong?
- Is health and safety an integral part of your day-to-day process for running your care home?

You can read the full document using this link:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/hsg220.pdf>





The risks relating to Windows and Doors in your properties are detailed below;

### **RISKS FROM FALLS FROM HEIGHTS**

Protecting residents from falls from heights is a key requirement of strategic asset management in the RECS. Resident falls from windows, balconies or stairs can result in serious or fatal injuries and there continues to be a high number of fatal and serious injury incidents to residents falling from windows in health and social care premises. Between 2005 and 2010 there were 21 fatal accidents from this cause across the UK.

The HSE identified three main causes of falls from windows that asset managers need to consider;

- **Accidental falls** – These can occur where a person is sitting on a window sill, leaning out of a window, or where the sill or banister height is low and acts as a pivot, allowing them to fall.
- **Falls arising out of confused mental state** – Many reported accidents involve residents in either a temporary or permanent confused mental state, often caused by senility or dementia, reduced mental capacity, mental disorder, or alcohol and drugs (both prescribed and illegal). In some cases, individuals try to escape from an environment they perceive to be hostile, and may use a window believing it to be an exit. Other factors may include unfamiliarity with new surroundings, uncomfortable temperatures, broken sleep and medication effects.
- **Deliberate self-harm** – This is a recognised risk for residents with certain mental health conditions

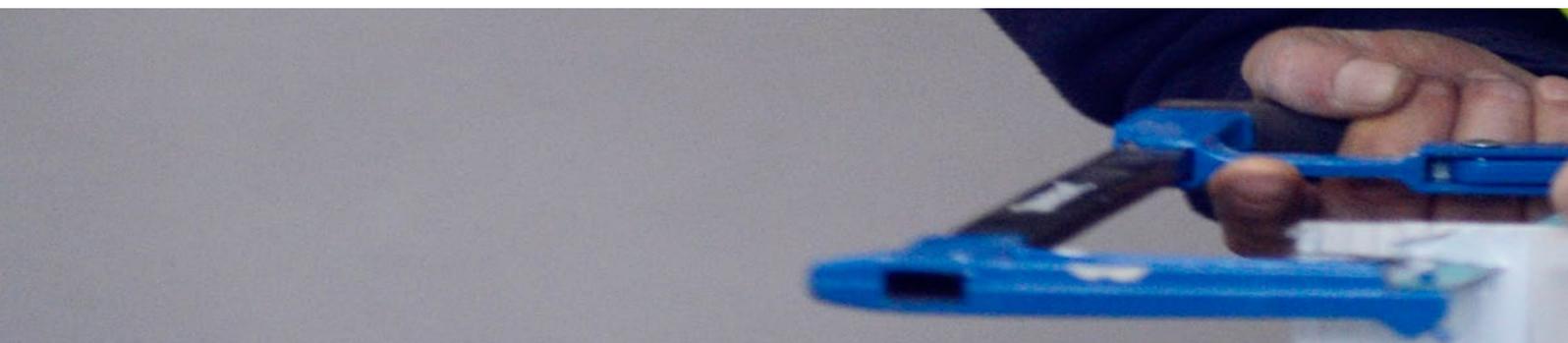


To adequately manage the risk of falls from windows or balconies, the care provider needs to assess the premises and service users. Two key areas need to be considered, window design and window restrictors

- **Window design** – The window frames and associated fittings must be sufficiently robust. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 Approved Code of Practice (workplace ACOP) – and Building Regulations – require that the bottom edge of opening windows should normally be at least 800 mm above floor level unless there is a barrier to prevent falls. This will reduce the risk of inadvertent falls where fully openable windows are assessed as being appropriate.

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- **Window Restrictors** - Where vulnerable people have access to windows large enough to allow them to fall out and be harmed, those windows should be restrained sufficiently to prevent such falls.





'Safety restricted hinges' that limit the initial opening of a window can be overridden without the use of any tools and are not suitable in health and social care premises where individuals are identified as being vulnerable to the risk of falls from windows.

In order for a Window Restrictor to be suitable for a care home environment, they **MUST:**

- Restrict the window to 100mm or less.
- Be suitably robust enough to withstand force and deliberate damage.
- Be tamper proof.





## TAMPER PROOF

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In this case the restrictor used was cable mounted to the opening frame which clips into a socket mounted to a non – opening part of the frame restricting the opening to 100 mm. Evidence at the inquest demonstrated that: If the cable was clipped into the socket by a simple push. It would appear secure when pulled or tugged. However, just by pushing the key lock/release button the cable was released. The cable was only secure when physically locked with a key. Even if locked, the lock was easily defeated within no more than a couple of seconds, by inserting the blade of a pair of scissors into the lock.

## THE FOUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARDS TO WINDOW RESTRICTORS ARE

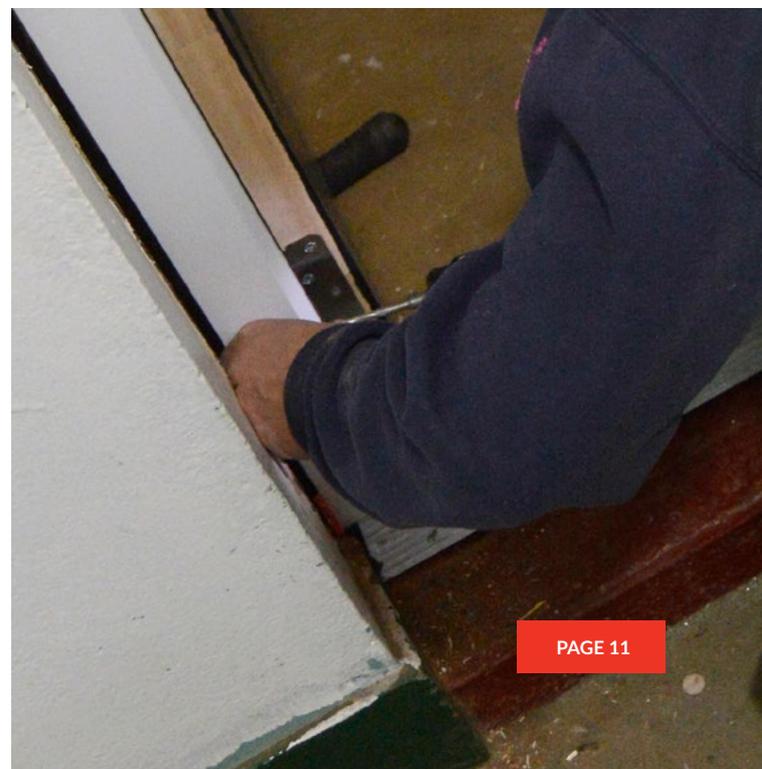
1. They should Restrict the window opening to 100 mm or less;
2. Be suitably robust to withstand foreseeable force applied by an individual determined to open a window further. Where the casement might distort, restrictors should be fitted at both side of the window.
3. Be sufficiently robust to withstand damage (either deliberate or from general wear);
4. Be robustly secured using tamper-proof fittings so they cannot be removed or disengaged using readily accessible implements (such as cutlery, nail files etc). They should require a special tool or key for removal. Windows fitted with initial opening restrictors (no facility to lock) are not suitable in social care premises where individuals are at risk, as they can easily be overridden.

It is also important to ensure that the restrictors are correctly installed by a company that has an excellent quality management system. Using the wrong type of screws for example to connect the restrictor to the casement could cause a failure when force is applied.



A Care Home provider in Wales **was fined almost £200,000 in 2014** following the death of a 92-year-old resident, who managed to overcome a restrictor device to open a window and fall from her first floor room.

Again an investigation by HSE found that all the windows were fitted with the same type of window restrictors, which were unsuitable for use in a care home because they could be easily over-ridden, so that the window could open wide





# FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety in buildings is addressed through two pieces of legislation: The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and The Housing Act 2004.

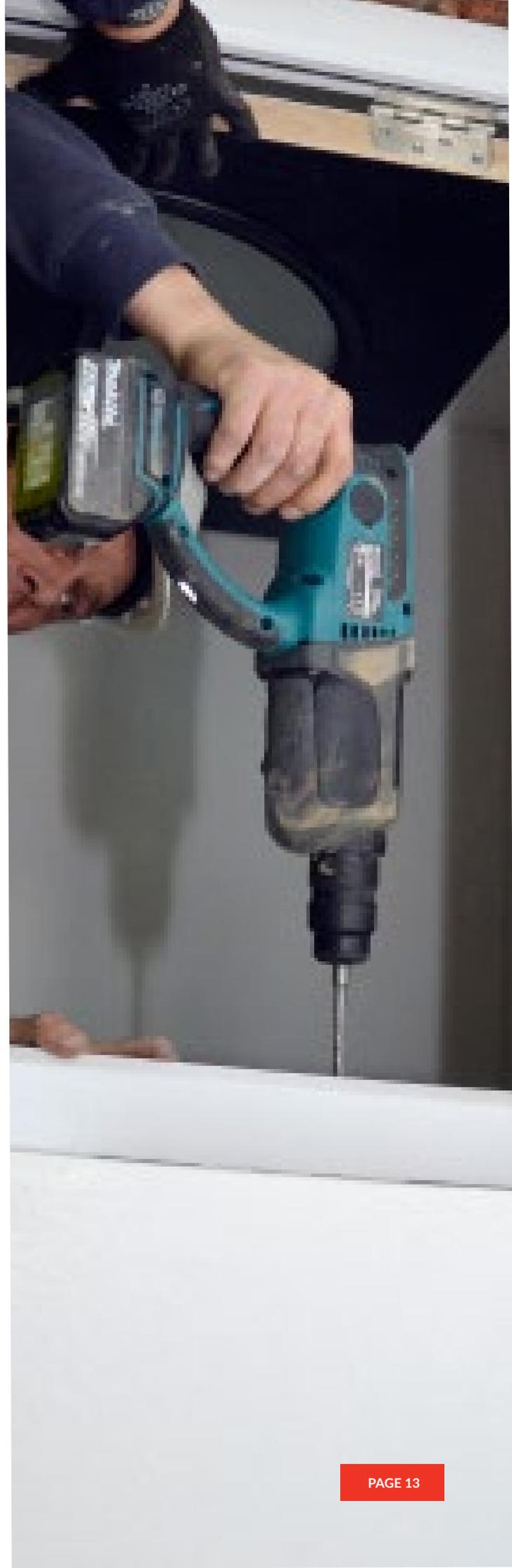
The responsibility for fire risk assessment in all non-domestic buildings, including the common parts of flats and houses of multiple occupation, falls to the so-called 'responsible person'. Under the FSO, the responsible person must carry out a fire safety risk assessment and implement and maintain a fire management plan.



# FIRE DOORS

Fire doors are designed to contain a fire to a single compartment of a building, therefore reducing the risk to those in other compartments.

- Properly maintained fire doors should be a part of the fire safety plan for every building.
- A fire door should only be installed with certificated components that will ensure it achieves its fire rating.
- Monthly check that fire doors are in good working order: inspect doors for warping or distortion, fire-resisting glazed panels are in good condition and secure in their frame, and that intumescent strips and smoke seals are in good condition.
- It is important to use a Certificated Fire Door Inspector (CertFDI) to carry out on-site inspections of installed fire doors in existing or new buildings.
- Any device that impedes people making good their escape, either by being unnecessarily complicated to manipulate or not being readily openable, will not be acceptable. It is important to remember that research carried out in 1983 found that people with physical impairments took two to nearly four times longer to evacuate a residential building in a simulated emergency evacuation exercise.



## RISK OF ARSON

Ensuring that locking systems on windows are operational is a key measure for guarding against the risk of arson. The HSE recommends that providers thoroughly secure all entry points to the premises, including windows and the roof, but make sure that this does not compromise people's ability to use the escape routes.

## MAINTENANCE REGIME

A Maintenance regime must be established to ensure that all safety fixtures and fittings are

functioning effectively and their performance has not deteriorated as a result of use, wear or tampering.

Without regular maintenance, windows and doors move out of alignment and become more difficult to operate without lubrication. For elderly residents this creates significant problems because they are no longer able to open and close windows for ventilation, windows become draughty causing dissatisfaction and increasing heating costs.

Regular inspection of restrictors is required to ensure that they remain operational and that nobody has attempted to tamper or cause damage to them.

Keeping records of the maintenance carried out will



help you demonstrate to the enforcing authority that you have complied with Health and Safety and Fire law.

## GUARANTEES

Much of the door and window hardware sold in the UK has a ten year guarantee. One of the things that is almost always written into the guarantee terms is an appropriate level of maintenance. Generally, hardware systems should be checked regularly in order to ensure they are lubricated, functioning properly and free of dirt and corrosion. Often this is needed only once a year, although if the hardware is exposed to a more aggressive environment, the maintenance may be needed more often.



Having a regular maintenance schedule in place means it is easy for you to prove you have met the terms of the guarantee should you need to make a claim. The warranty provider is thereby not given a get-out clause.

## WINDOW LIFECYCLES

Modern windows and doors depreciate rapidly in value when left to their own devices. Maintenance can slow this decline and extend the active life cycle of each unit, reducing waste and replacement costs.

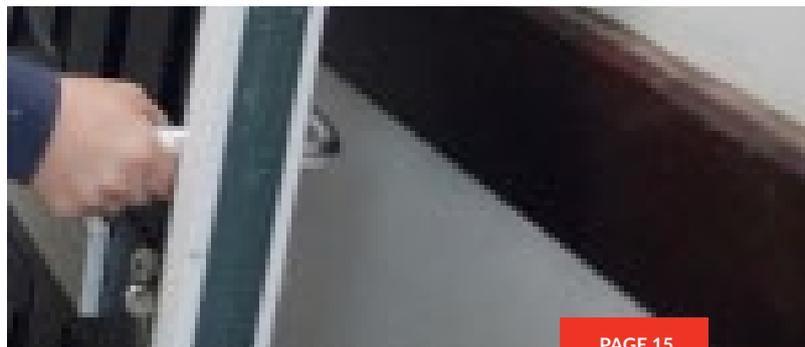
It is not unrealistic to say that a good maintenance regime can extend the life of windows by 10 years. The impact of this is huge for the REC sector and for individual landlords with shorter replacement cycles. Over a 60-year period, 'Landlord A' with a 30-year replacement cycle would replace their windows twice, while 'Landlord B' with a 30-year cycle would replace their windows three times.

At an average replacement cost per property of around £1,500, 'Landlord B' would spend an **extra £1.5 million** per 1,000 properties over the cycle.

## TYPICAL APPROACH TO MAINTENANCE IN THE RECS

Although no two organisations are exactly the same, across the board there is a typical approach to facilities management and maintenance.

- All maintenance issues, including windows and doors, are dealt with by a general operative, either directly employed or working for a third-party contractor.
- Maintenance reacts to faults as and when they are reported by residents.
- There is little or no planned or regular maintenance.
- The emphasis is on replacing parts rather than repairing or refurbishing them. This is deemed to reduce disruption, but it actually only increases waste and reduces value per unit.
- Replacements are made when an unfixable fault is believed to occur. There is no schedule of replacements. This means that replacement times and life cycles are difficult to estimate and overall maintenance costs are imprecise.
- Reliance on 'guesstimates' rather than sound financial plans and predictable refresh timetables.



## PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THIS APPROACH

This approach is fraught with several problems, both to the provider and to their residents.

**For Residents:** A negative perception is immediately created by virtue of the resident having to report the problem themselves. This is compounded if the issue is not resolved quickly or on the first visit. The more visits that are required, and the longer until the fault is resolved, the more disruption is suffered by the residents. Contrary to this, preventative maintenance, which we will explore in more detail in the following section, creates a positive perception as it shows the provider proactively cares about its tenants.

**For Providers:** The typical approach has a negative effect in terms of asset values. This all comes down to depreciation. If the repair is ineffective and is only good in the short-term, the asset value may depreciate quicker than anticipated. This has two unwanted consequences: Firstly, the relative cost of your assets increases as the average life cycle length is reduced; and secondly, accelerated depreciation makes it more difficult to secure funding for growth and development. In addition void beds are more difficult to let, remaining empty for longer if rooms are not in perfect state of repair.

From a safety and quality point of view inspection of works carried out is also an issue. If you employ a handy person you still must ensure that quality of their work is being correctly inspected. The HSE is specific saying that the person who inspects should be different from the person who carries routine maintenance so you don't have a situation where someone is **'inspecting their own work'**.

**For Staff:** Care homes reporting high worker job satisfaction also report high quality of resident care and high resident satisfaction. So the first essential for resident well-being is high worker job satisfaction. Managing maintenance can be difficult for care home managers if they are not provided with support. Difficulty sourcing suitable contractors or dealing with residents unhappy with the quality of repairs carried out adds to staff workloads and negatively affects their job satisfaction.





## THE MILA ALTERNATIVE

At Mila, we aim to break the mould of the traditional approach to window and door maintenance by providing active and responsive care for your assets throughout their life-cycle.

For you, this gives better value for money and greater efficiency than reactive repairs. It also leads to greater resident satisfaction and an increase in social value within your community.

In this section we will outline our alternative approach to long-term window and door maintenance. The long-term approach is always to sustain the existing items, by regular maintenance, to ensure they last and are problem-free. This approach has been proven to maintain units in near-perfect condition, even in stocks that are beyond their write-off period in the lifecycle.

There are several principles that underpin our approach:

- Regular maintenance is essential to ensure that resident safety is maintained as their condition changes over time.

- Regular maintenance increases asset value by extending the lifecycle of windows and doors. This reduces asset depreciation rates.
- Windows and doors are a different proposition to other household assets and should therefore be treated separately to general facilities management.
- It is more cost-effective for you, and less disruptive to your residents, to refurbish and renew existing doors and windows whenever possible, rather than replacing them. This also reduces waste.
- Maintenance should not only be reactive, i.e. maintenance in response to a reported fault, but should be carried out at regular intervals throughout the lifecycle.



## MILA SURVEY TO MAINTAIN

Our Mila Survey to Maintain package is the start point for your on-going maintenance programme.

Understanding the condition of your stock is critical to knowing what the problems you may have face now, and what problems you may have to face in the future.

It enables you to ensure that all safety devices such as window restrictors and fire doors are operational and meet current legislation and best practice.

Included in the Mila Survey to Maintain Package

- Our trained engineers will come and undertake a full condition survey of all your windows and doors within a designated street, estate, block of flats, or sheltered accommodation.
- We will ease, adjust, and lubricate all moving parts on the designated windows and doors to restore them to full functionality.

- We will develop a complete component register for you to have a record of the original specification of all items which will help with the sourcing of original replacement parts for future maintenance.
- We will provide a 12 months guarantee on the functionality of the ironmongery.
- We will provide you with a full report of any items requiring immediate replacement and a schedule of works and associated cost to carry out the works should you wish our trained engineers to do so. This will give you a record to demonstrate to the enforcing authority that you have complied with Health and Safety and Fire law.

## **WHY YOU SHOULD SEPARATE WINDOWS & DOORS FROM GENERAL FM**

It is tempting to assign all of your facilities management tasks to a general contractor, including windows and doors. On the surface, it makes sense to only deal with one supplier, as this keeps it simple.

However, we know from experience that there are over 300 specifications of window and door hardware in the UK social housing market, borne out of a relentless sales drive over many years by the companies who specialised in their production. Unfortunately, most of those specifications are now redundant and replacement parts are very much obsolete. That is where the skills of a specialist contractor come to the fore. We know when we visit a resident's home we will be able to identify the parts that were fitted originally, and

that we will be able to source and procure suitable 'fit for purpose' replacements.

We also know that we will be able to reinstall them correctly and offer a new guarantee back to the client that extends the life of their asset, and that there is a controlled record keeping system to update the specification of the hardware which has been replaced.

Beyond this, there are three other important reasons why we recommend you separate windows and doors from general FM tasks:

- 1) **Correct diagnosis:** Our engineers are window and door specialists. We have expert knowledge of the hardware and are more likely to make a correct diagnosis first time. Modern windows and doors are complex units with a number of parts that can go wrong. It is easy therefore for a non-specialist to make an error in diagnosis, resulting in unnecessary expenses for the wrong parts.
- 2) **Understanding of Legislation:** As identified earlier there is a number of key safety requirements and duties of care that must be adhered to by providers. Using a specialist contractor with experience of working within the RECS sector ensures that they have a good understanding of legislation and can advise you to changes to regulation as they occur.
- 3) **Better first time fix rate:** Our engineers keep a wide stock of common parts in their vans. Combined with their accurate diagnostic ability and technical expertise, this results in a high first-time fix rate.

4) **Efficiency:** By reducing the number of wrong diagnoses and repeat visits, you end up with a far more cost-effective service, which fixes faults quickly and increases resident satisfaction.

5) **Better customer satisfaction through minimal disruption:** Each housing unit under your care is home to a family, couple or individual. We have a duty of care to provide the highest level of service to your residents with the minimum of disruption. Approaching each job in this way yields greater customer satisfaction results in consistent surveys.



## OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL RECS CONTRACTOR

1) **Pre-Approved Contractors:** Though vetting is required to make sure that the contractors working in your residents properties meet the highest standards of health and safety, workmanship and customer care. For all our contracts we ensure that only suitable engineers work on-site around vulnerable residents. During the recruitment and selection process we undertake full right to work, identity, reference and enhanced DBS checks on all applicants. An offer of employment is only made upon the receipt of satisfactory results for these checks. Once obtained, all DBS checks are renewed every three years, helping us assess the ongoing suitability of our staff and minimising any risks to the public.

2) **Easy Appointment Booking:** Mila Maintenance has the ability to accept work requests on a 24/7, 365 day basis by telephone or email. Staffing costs are the major cost driver for the sector so select

a contractor that enables your staff to make work requests through a single point of contact using pre-agreed rates. This reduces their time spent sourcing suppliers helping reduce their workload and improve job satisfaction.

3) **Customer Care:** When working in the home of elderly and vulnerable residents, high levels of customer care are needed. Following the arrangement of an appointment, we always send confirmation to the resident by email, telephone or letter to ensure they are aware of our scheduled attendance and the name of the attending surveyor/engineer.

24 hours before pre-agreed routine appointments, we contact the resident to confirm the suitability of the proposed date. This also enables us to answer any queries regarding the planned repair and obtain the details of any preferences or requirements for the visit that have not already been provided.

Examples include the need for family or friends to attend.

All our engineers carry identification, wear Mila branded clothing and drive Mila branded vehicles.

Should the resident still be unsure about the identity of the engineer they can ring our 24-7 customer support line, charged at local rates, before allowing the engineer entry into their property. We provide residents using our out-of-hours service with passwords which will be given by the engineer before access to further reassure residents.

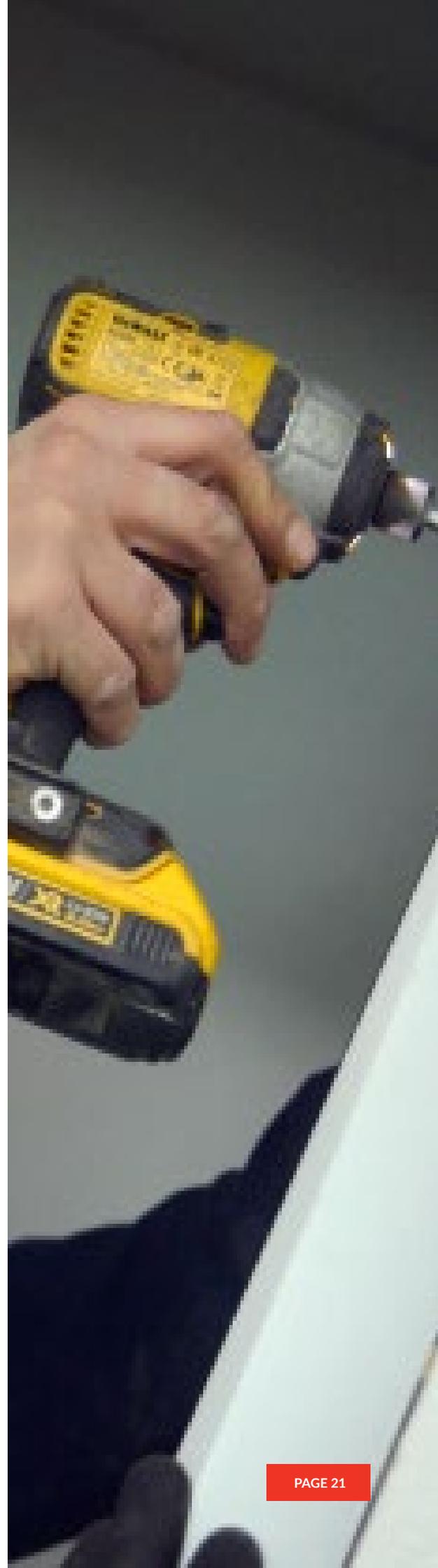
**4) Customer Satisfaction Monitoring:** It is important that the contractors you select monitor ongoing customer satisfaction to make sure that your residents are happy with the repairs that have been carried out and any issues and complaints are quickly resolved.

Mila Maintenance current average rating for customer satisfaction is 96% given by residents following works in their homes. Our current method of getting customer opinion is that once the service call is complete, the resident will sign off the works following an inspection and will be asked to complete a satisfaction survey to rate the overall quality of the installation works.

This will be followed by a feedback telephone call within five working days, checking the resident's satisfaction with the installation and answering any of their queries. Residents are asked to rate us on a scale of 1-5 on the following; Identification given on arrival, courtesy and respect shown, work carried out in a tidy and safe manner, satisfaction with works carried out and overall satisfaction.

To see an example of best practice customer satisfaction reports, see our website:

<http://www.milamaintenance.co.uk/resident-client-feedback/>



**Mila Window & Door Maintenance**

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