

Seeing it Through Together

The Durkan Resident Liaison Service




DURKAN

One Team, Many Strengths



Working in Your Home – Building a Partnership With Residents

When you first get the news that your home is to be modernised or improved, you will naturally feel quite pleased. You might have been waiting a long time for the works to happen, struggling with worn out facilities, and you will be keen to enjoy the benefits that the improvements will bring - new kitchens and bathrooms, a new heating system to make your home warmer, or perhaps replacement windows and doors to make your home quieter and more secure.

However, you might also feel a little apprehensive. The thought of having major works carried out in your home while you try to carry on life as normal can be a little daunting.

As the start date approaches, some of the questions you may find yourself asking are:

- How long will it take?
- Will the contractors clear up after themselves?
- Will I still be able to cook a meal?
- How will I keep the place warm?
- What about my bathroom – will I still be able to use it?

We at Durkan have been working with residents in their homes for over forty years. Experience has taught us that successful projects don't happen by accident, only by working closely with you - keeping you informed, responding to your concerns and above all treating you and your home with respect we can hope to achieve a successful project.

To us, a 'successful project' is one that:

- **Runs smoothly** throughout the whole course of the works, with the minimum of disruption and inconvenience for residents.
- **Finishes on time** – we want to complete the project as soon as we can, ahead of time if possible. We realise that it can be 'hard work' having contractors in your home and we don't want to impose on you for any longer than is necessary.
- **Gives you a quality product** – we want you to be fully satisfied with the work that we carry out - after all it's your home, and you are the reason we are here.

The Durkan Resident Liaison Team – What We Do

Experience has taught us that to achieve these goals and build a solid partnership, it is vital to have a team member dedicated specifically to working with and on behalf of the residents.

Durkan were one of the first Contractors to establish a Resident Liaison Service. The service is dedicated to serving the needs of all residents – tenants, leaseholders and site 'neighbours'.





The role of the Durkan Resident Liaison Service is to:

- **Establish an early presence on your estate** - before the actual site set-up is in place and provide a personal introduction to residents.
- **Develop good working relationships with residents**, Community Groups and neighbours, based on mutual trust and co-operation.
- **Provide residents with *information* and *support*** throughout the project from start to finish.
- **Act as first point of contact between residents and all the other parties involved in the project** – such as site management, your landlord and their representatives, and any other agencies that may become involved.
- **Deal with complaints, requests and suggestions** – according to the procedure described below.
- **Present 'Resident Choice' materials** such as different kitchen units, paint colours, tiles and flooring types according to what is being offered in the project. To help you to make your choices and keep accurate records so that the right materials are ordered for your home.

Who is my Resident Liaison Officer?

Our Resident Liaison Officers (RLO's for short) come from a variety of backgrounds including social housing, the voluntary and Customer Service sectors, as well as the Construction Industry.

We select our RLO's carefully, choosing them on the basis of their proven skills and experience. All our RLO's are 'front line' staff – used to working closely with the public, 'face-to-face'. They are good communicators, they will listen carefully to your concerns and can get your views across to senior members of the management team. They are also skilled problem-solvers in their own right, so that they can usually resolve issues on-site, quickly and with the minimum of fuss.

Lastly, but by no means least, our RLO's are friendly, cheerful and approachable.

Once an RLO is selected for the project, they will visit the site and hand deliver a letter of introduction. This will include a photograph, an outline of the scope of works and contact details.

A detailed list of the duties of the RLO is contained in Appendix I.

Keeping you in Touch with what is going on (Communication)

At Durkan we know that if a programme of work is to be successful, it is vital to communicate effectively with residents. Communication is a two-way process, and as well as providing up-to-date information we are also committed to listening to you.

We seek to always let you know:

- What is going to happen and when
- Who to talk to if they have any questions or concerns
- How to contact the right person

We will use a number of ways of communicating in order to keep you up-to-date.

Notice Letters – We will always provide you with written notice **14 days** before we intend to start work in your home. We will issue a reminder **2 days** before we are due to commence work.

General Letters and Newsletters – We will let you know when major stages in a project are about to start, such as scaffold erection or the commencement of groundworks. In this way we can let you know if there is likely to be any noise or disturbance, so that you are able to make alternative arrangements, or at least be prepared. These letters will always contain appropriate Health and Safety advice, so as to minimise the risk of injury or accident.

Telephone and E-mail – With your consent we will take contact details so that if we need to contact you quickly we can. This is also very useful for residents who may be asking friends or relatives to act on their behalf, but who do not live close by.

Public Meetings – There is usually at least one of these early on, they offer you the chance to meet the project team and ask any questions you might have.

Personal Contact – There is no substitute for face-to-face contact, and we feel that this is one of the real strengths of our service. Your RLO will seek to become a part of your community while we are working on your estate. We like to ‘break the ice’ and get to know residents as soon as possible so that you will feel comfortable in approaching your RLO and confident of getting a positive response.

Where residents do not have English as their first language, we will liaise with them and the local housing office so that we can quickly identify a relative or friend who can interpret between us. Although it is possible to use a commercial agency to translate letters etc. if strictly necessary, we have found that residents feel far more comfortable speaking to us through someone who is familiar to them, rather than through a stranger.

Making the Partnership Work – What We Need From You

Arranging Access – The key to Ensuring Smooth Progress

Before we begin on-site, we draw up a programme of works. This is a schedule of work and enables us to advise you and your landlord when work will start and finish in each property. We strive to maintain the programme, so that you gain the benefit of any improvements in the shortest possible time.



In order to maintain programme, it is vital that we achieve regular and continuous access to your home for as long as we are scheduled to do so. If we are delayed in one home due to access restrictions, this has a 'knock-on' effect and starts to delay the next phase.

If we persistently fail to gain access in a particular property, and are unable to contact the resident, we will advise your landlord, with a view to resolving the issue. If we cannot resolve these issues, we may have no option but to move on, leaving that property part completed – only returning at the end of the project. This is a rare occurrence as our experience shows that generally residents are keen for the works to be completed with the minimum of disruption.

Before Work Commences

Making Contact, Surveying your Home

We will usually need to carry out a survey of your home before work commences. During this survey, your RLO may be accompanied by our sub-contractors and the landlord's representative. Working closely with the resident and following our tried and tested procedures avoids unnecessary repeat visits.

We will always advise you of exactly who will be attending before we carry out the survey.



We need your co-operation to make sure these surveys are carried out on time. They are very important because they allow us to:

- **Design kitchens and bathrooms** if they form part of the works.
- Survey your existing **electrical, gas and water** installations, as well as check for **hazardous substances** such as asbestos.
- See if any existing structures need to be **repaired** or **modified**.

This information allows us to programme the work sensibly and avoids any 'nasty surprises' once works begin. This in turn helps you because the less delays we encounter, the quicker we will complete the works to your home.

These surveys also allow us to:

- **Introduce you to some of the tradesmen who will actually be working in your home.** You may have some initial questions about different aspects of the work - these can be answered at this stage, and when work starts you will already be familiar with the contractors working in your home.
- **Take details about your own particular circumstances so that we can take into account your personal needs and requirements when planning a programme of works to your home.** For instance there may be dates when you are not available – perhaps because you have already booked a holiday. You may have work or childcare commitments that limit the times when you will be available.

There may be issues regarding your health that you may wish us to be aware of, or there may be occasions when you do not want us to work in your home for religious or cultural reasons.

Any information that you provide us, including contact details, will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Starting Work - Treating Your Home with Respect, Protecting your Belongings

Our staff are selected for their experience of working in residents' homes. We respect your home as if it were our own. We are aware of the need to work very carefully around your belongings, and to minimise the risk of any damage, we have some sensible procedures that we carry out whenever we enter an occupied property:

- With your permission, we install carpet/flooring protection the day before work starts and leave it in place until works are completed. We have found this is more effective than to lift and re-lay protection on a daily basis.
- We use high quality dust sheets to protect furniture and appliances, and we will provide dust seals to other rooms if necessary.
- Tradesmen are required to clean working areas to an acceptable standard at the end of each day, including wet or dry vacuuming where necessary.
- The RLO and the Site Manager regularly inspect homes throughout and at the end of each day to ensure that standards are being maintained.

A copy of the code of conduct under which our staff and sub-contractors work is contained in Appendix ii.

The Working Day

On the majority of projects, our normal working hours are from 8.00am to 5.00pm, with a break at midday. We require these overall hours to ensure that the refurbishment works are completed as quickly as possible. Our Residents Charter is agreed prior to any work commencing and deals with, for example, 'noisy work' restrictions, material deliveries and service shut downs.

‘Life must go on’ – Keeping your Home Running During The Works

Your world doesn't stop just because we are working in your home. Although we can't promise you won't experience any inconvenience or disruptions, we do our very best to keep any disturbances to a minimum.

Maintaining Essential Services

Understandably, residents are often very concerned about losing their heating, cooking or bathroom facilities while work is in progress. At Durkan, it is our policy that no resident will be without these essential services at any time.

- If we are installing a new kitchen, **we will provide you with a temporary sink and worktop until your kitchen is fitted.** This will be connected to your water supply by flexible fittings. We will ensure that this is always re-connected at the end of each working day.
- If we are installing a bathroom, we will replace your old suite with a new one **in the same day.**
- If we are fitting a new boiler, we will maintain your old system until we switch your new boiler on. If either your old or new systems fail for any reason, we will provide portable heaters until the issue is resolved.
- We will check at the end of each day that all your services are working correctly.

What If I Just Want To Get Out Of The Way While The Works Are Going On?

On major refurbishment projects, your landlord may ask us to set up an 'oasis' unit. This is like a mobile home – fitted out like an average home with a lounge, kitchen and toilet facilities. These units are fully adapted for wheelchair users. They are equipped with a TV, sofas and chairs, and facilities in the kitchen such as a microwave, fridge, kettle, cups and cutlery. Should the works become 'uncomfortable' for you to stay in your home, the Oasis Unit is available for your use.



Acting Responsibly - Promoting Health And Safety

As a responsible contractor, Durkan take great care to make sure all our work is carried out in strict accordance with current Health and Safety regulations. We have a responsibility for this not only to our own workers, but also to you, the residents.

We ask you to play your part throughout the project by co-operating with us by;

- Taking notice of any health and safety advice we issue at meetings or in letters
- By ensuring that any children in your family or under your care are kept away from work areas, machinery and scaffolding
- By being vigilant. If you see anything that you feel may be of concern don't be afraid to tell us – we will be very grateful.

Security Matters – Protecting your Home During the Works

Although residents often tell us that having our workers on site makes them feel more secure, we are aware that major building works can sometimes attract 'opportunist' crimes.

We will ensure your home is secure by:

- Issuing all our staff with ID cards bearing our logo, the operatives photograph and the authorisation signature of the RLO.
- Introducing you to all workers the first time they enter your home
- Ensuring that your entrance doors and windows are always locked if a worker leaves your home empty.
- Working closely with the local Community Safety Team, making them aware that the works are taking place, requesting that they increase patrols of the site and initiating a quick response system if any suspicious activity is reported.

Again, we would ask you to work in partnership with us to keep your homes safe by:

- Not allowing anyone into your home without an ID card
- Telling us immediately if you see anyone who you think is acting suspiciously – don't hesitate, its better to be safe than sorry!

What If Things Go Wrong? - Durkan's Complaints Procedure

Even on successful projects, and despite everyone's best intentions, things may still go wrong. At Durkan, our philosophy is to not to run away from problems, or ignore them - but to face them head on and deal with them. We will always try to minimise complaints by keeping up effective consultation and communication

We aim to respond to any complaints quickly and efficiently, making sure that we listen carefully and act with sensitivity and fairness at all times. In our experience, this 'common sense' approach to complaints leads to most problems being resolved to everyone's satisfaction, with the minimum amount of delay.

By processing and resolving your complaints as soon as they arise, we hope to maintain a good working relationship with residents.

The Complaints, Comments and Suggestions Register

All Durkan sites operate a register in the form of a 'triplicate' book. This is used to record any complaints that are received, as well as to log any suggestions residents might have regarding the works. When a complaint is entered in the register, three copies are produced:

- A copy is kept centrally, in the RLO's office
- A copy is given to the resident making the complaint
- A copy is passed to the client (usually your landlord or their agent)

This ensures that everyone involved is aware of the nature of the complaint; the action plan that has been agreed; and the timetable for action. The complaint can now be 'tracked' by all parties to make sure that the agreed action plan is carried out and the problem resolved.

What If I Have A Complaint?

- **Raise the complaint with your RLO.** Be clear and concise, and include, where appropriate, dates, times etc. We cannot initiate the complaints procedure unless we receive a formal complaint.
- **Put your complaint in writing, or discuss it with the RLO** who will then record your complaint in the site register. If you are happy that the record is accurate, you will be asked to sign the register. Written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within twenty-four hours, and the complainant will be invited to meet the RLO to seek a resolution to the problem.
- **Agree a course of action.** In the vast majority of cases, the RLO is able to resolve the problem immediately. In these circumstances, the agreed solution, and a timetable for carrying it out will also be recorded in the register.
- **Confirm the complaint has been resolved.** Once the agreed action has been carried out, the RLO will ask the resident to countersign the register to confirm that the complaint has been resolved to their satisfaction.

What if a Complaint affects Several Residents, Not just Me?

Sometimes a problem can arise which is of general concern because it affects a lot of residents – this might be a fault that occurs in several flats, or perhaps a design issue that several residents have concerns about.

When a problem like this occurs, your first contact should be the RLO. However, if the problem is something that cannot be resolved at this level, we will consult with the project team (including your landlord) - and work with them – and you - to agree a solution.

What if the Workers Break Something? – Dealing with Accidental Damage

Unfortunately, accidents do happen. If breakages occur, or if there is damage to your home as a result of something we have done, we will seek to resolve the problem, as soon as possible. These are our procedures:

Just before works starts, with your consent, the RLO will carry out a photographic or video survey of your home. This protects all parties and provides a clear visual record of your home before works commence.

- Where damages occur that can be made good by our own staff, we will always seek to do this.
- Where a personal belonging is damaged or broken, the RLO is authorised to re-imburse the cost of replacement up to the value of £50.00.
- On the rare occasions when damage to a higher value occurs, your RLO will investigate the circumstances and if appropriate seek the consent of senior staff to agree the appropriate level of reimbursement. Durkan are fully insured against any damages that might occur.



Completing the Job – Measuring Your Satisfaction

We constantly strive to improve the way we work. Once the works are complete we will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire that measures our performance.

This survey is important as it lets us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. This is your opportunity to comment on our service.

Our role does not end with us finishing the job. We will be responsible for maintaining our work for upto 12 months from the date we leave your home. During this time your RLO will continue to be your point of contact should any problems arise.

Postscript

We hope that you will enjoy your home once we have carried out the programmed works. Our aim is to achieve total customer satisfaction.

Appendices

Appendix I

- **Durkan Resident Liaison Officer** - Principal Duties and Responsibilities.

Appendix II

- **Durkan Code of Conduct** for Staff Working in Residents' Homes.

Appendix I

Durkan Resident Liaison Officer – Principal Duties and Responsibilities

1. Provide letter of introduction for all residents at commencement of project, giving names of the project team as appropriate, and full contact details for the Resident Liaison Officer. The letter should also give details of proposed scope of works, the likely duration of works, and a provisional indication of the likely occupation date for each property.
2. Give 28 and 14 day notices of commencement date at each property. Where late alterations to programme do not allow prescribed notice periods, advise resident/s of commencement date at earliest possible opportunity.
3. Confirm the start date for each property 2 days before works commence.
4. Advise residents in writing of any delays or amendments to programmes. If it is not practicable to give written advice of change of schedule, e.g. because a programme changes with immediate effect, contact the resident personally to explain the circumstances.
5. If a resident's particular circumstances mean that they would be unduly inconvenienced or distressed by a programme change, bring the matter to the attention of the Site manager/Contracts manager with a view to making suitable alternative arrangements.
6. If access is persistently withheld despite making, or attempting to make, firm appointments, notify client's representative so that they can take appropriate action. Inform resident and Contracts manager of referral.

7. Operate Durkan Ltd Complaints procedure. Ensure that resident, and relevant project personnel, including the client's representative, are kept informed of complaint, action plan, and progress.
8. Issue newsletter to all residents on a regular basis, according to requirements of client and contract. Include in newsletter all information that will keep residents informed of programme progress, variations to scope of the works, and health and safety as it affects residents. Provide full contact details for feedback and comment.
9. Issue supplementary letters as required to notify residents of any specific issues that affect progress or scope of the works.
10. Hold evening 'surgeries' as appropriate and record any matters raised.

Appendix II

The Durkan Code of Conduct for Sub-Contractors and Operatives Working in Residents' Homes.

1. The Health and Safety of residents shall be of paramount importance at all times. We must consider this at all times when working in residents' homes. Operatives should take into account the particular circumstances of the property in which they are working – for instance if there are children, elderly, or infirm people in residence, or people who have a different language and might need to be made aware of what they need to do in order to maintain a safe working area.
2. We must at all times be aware that we have a responsibility to maintain the security of residents' homes and property while we are on site. To this end, all operatives shall carry photographic identity cards at all times. The card can be authorised by the Contract Manager, site manager, or Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) only. The card shall be visible at all times. Residents will be instructed to bar entry to any operative not in possession of a valid identity card.
3. All operatives are expected to act in a civil, courteous, and professional manner towards residents at all times. You are asked to respect residents' homes, fixtures and fittings, and personal belongings as if they were your own.

4. If an operative considers they are unable to work in a property because of the actions of a resident, for instance if they encounter verbal or physical abuse (or the threat of physical abuse), they should leave the property immediately and notify the RLO or site manager of the problem. Under no circumstances should you argue with a resident or show aggression of any kind. The RLO will visit the resident concerned and make sure the situation is resolved before asking you to recommence work.
5. Appointments made with residents by the RLO should be honoured at all times. If, for reasons beyond your control, an appointment cannot be kept, then you must contact the RLO in good time so that the resident can be advised, and alternative arrangements made. It should be noted that Durkan Ltd place great importance on punctual attendance at residents' homes. Repeated failure to honour appointments could lead to the issue of a non-conformance notice.
6. If access cannot be gained, operative/s must contact the site manager/RLO immediately. The RLO will then contact the resident to seek access, or arrange an alternative property to work in. If a resident continually fails to allow access, the RLO will bring the matter to the attention of the client, and works in that property will stop until the situation is resolved.
7. Residents' fixtures, fittings, and belongings must be properly protected during the course of works within their homes. Clean, good quality dust sheets should be used at all times, and cleared away at the end of each day. Where necessary, a sturdy non-absorbent material such as 'correx' will cut to size and fixed in place with adhesive tape before laying dust sheets.
8. All debris and dust resulting from the works shall be cleared away at the end of the working day. Carpets shall be hoovered clean. Where plumbing or other works has created water pooling on floors, a 'wet-suction' vacuum cleaner must be used to clean and dry the area.
9. All residents' homes shall be left in a watertight and secure condition at the end of each working day, or break in works. On no account should a door be left open in an occupied property if the resident is not at home. If closing a door to take an authorised break will mean you cannot regain access – advise the site manager or RLO immediately.

10. All tools and plant shall be kept within working areas and not left unattended. On no account should occupied properties be used to store tools or materials.
11. Operatives shall not use any facilities within residents' homes without their express permission. This includes using resident's electricity, water, or toilet facilities.
12. Operatives will dress in a presentable manner at all times. Bare chests, cut-off jeans etc. are not acceptable. Dressing in this manner is not professional, is not safe, and is disrespectful to residents. Failure to comply with this regulation will lead to disciplinary action.
13. The use of radios, cassettes, or any other audio equipment, with or without headphones is not permitted.
14. Smoking is not permitted in residents' homes, or in any areas other than those designated by the site manager.
15. Operatives must not use foul or offensive language. Working in residents' homes means you must be sensitive to the kind of language you use. The use of foul language, or racist or sexist comments will lead to disciplinary action.
16. Operatives shall not request or accept gifts or inducements from residents.
17. Operatives shall be aware that there is a complaints procedure available to residents. If a resident makes it clear that they wish to make a complaint, you should immediately refer him/her to the RLO.
18. All operatives shall abide by the Durkan Ltd Equal Opportunities Policy. No resident or co-worker should be treated less favourably on the grounds of their gender, ethnic origin, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. Durkan Ltd will consider any breach of this policy as a disciplinary matter.



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