

Reducing Defects through Organizational Learning within a Housing Association Environment

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Abstract : Housing Associations (HAs) contribute circa 20% of the UK's housing supply. HAs are however under increasing pressure as a result of funding cuts and rent reductions. Due to the increased pressure, a number of processes are currently being reviewed by HAs, especially how they manage and learn from defects. Learning from defects is considered a useful approach to achieving defect reduction within the UK housebuilding industry. This paper contributes to our understanding of how HAs learn from defects by undertaking an initial round table discussion with key HA stakeholders as part of an ongoing collaborative research project with the National House Building Council (NHBC) to better understand how house builders and HAs learn from defects to reduce their prevalence. The initial discussion shows that defect information runs through a number of groups, both internal and external of a HA during both the defects management process and organizational learning (OL) process. Furthermore, HAs are reliant on capturing and recording defect data as the foundation for the OL process. During the OL process defect data analysis is the primary enabler to recognizing a need for a change to organizational routines. When a need for change has been recognized, new options are typically pursued to design out defects via updates to a HAs Employer's Requirements. Proposed solutions are selected by a review board and committed to organizational routine. After implementing a change, both structured and unstructured feedback is sought to establish the change's success. The findings from the HA discussion demonstrates that OL can achieve defect reduction within the house building sector in the UK. The paper concludes by outlining a potential 'learning from defects model' for the housebuilding industry as well as describing future work.

Keywords : defects, new homes, housing association, organizational learning

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