



Survey on impact of refurbishments

AFF is aware that the number of respondents represents only a fraction of the number of projects completed in the last few years. AFF understands that refurbishments need to be done in order to maintain the fabric and condition of SFA however this survey was done to gauge the families' feelings and perception of living through the works.

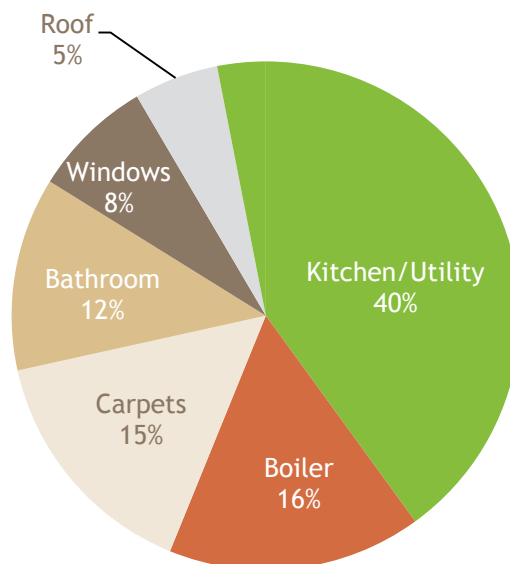
1. Have any of your SFA been refurbished whilst you were living in it?

141 responses

Yes 60% (85) No 40% (56)

2. Which area was refurbished?

130 responses



Kitchen/Utility

3. Were you able to cook in the house during the day?

39 responses

Yes 15% (6) No 85% (33)

Many families indicated that they often did not have access to a cooker and had to buy takeaway meals or microwave ready meals.

AFF View: AFF is aware that during the day the kitchen is non-operational for safety reasons however; our findings demonstrate that families have an extra cost associated with the works, especially if they have children at home during the day.

4. Were you left with a working kitchen area at the end of every day?

39 responses

Yes 38.5% (15) No 61.5% (24)

5. Was this fit for you to cook in?

39 responses

Yes 23% (9) No 77% (30)

Many families indicated that the area was dirty or dusty and not fit for use.

AFF View: AFF understands that a full clean at the end of every day is impractical however the work area, sink and cooker should be left hygienically clean.

6. Was there room for you to eat?

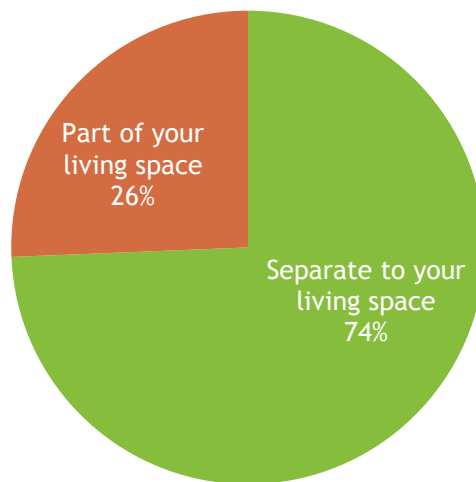
39 responses

Yes 36% (14) No 64% (25)

Many families indicated that they ate off trays in the living room, as the kitchen wasn't suitable for eating in and their dining room/area was full of their kitchen belongings.

7. Is your dining space:

39 responses



For those who have a combined dining and living space the impact of the refurbishments is likely to be greater as the storage of kitchen items will have more of an impact on their living space

8. Where did you store your belongings?

37 responses

The majority of respondents said that they stored their belongings in the dining room or living room, with some storing them in their spare room or in the garage/garden.

9. If you asked for boxes to pack away your kitchen contents were these provided by the contractor?

39 responses

Yes 23% (9) No 77% (30)

AFF View: Due to the lack of a specified timeframe some responses may have been from projects before the provision of boxes was introduced, however, a large percentage of families who responded to this question were not provided with boxes and the comments reflect that those who did ask, were often not given robust or sufficient containers.

10. Were you able to wash and dry your clothes at home during the works?
39 responses

Yes 41% (16) **No** 59% (23)

Several respondents indicated that they could only use their washing facilities at weekends. This becomes an issue for those families who need to do regular laundry runs especially in those areas where there are no public laundrettes. Some were able to continue to use their washing machines if they had a utility room which was not being refurbished at the same time.

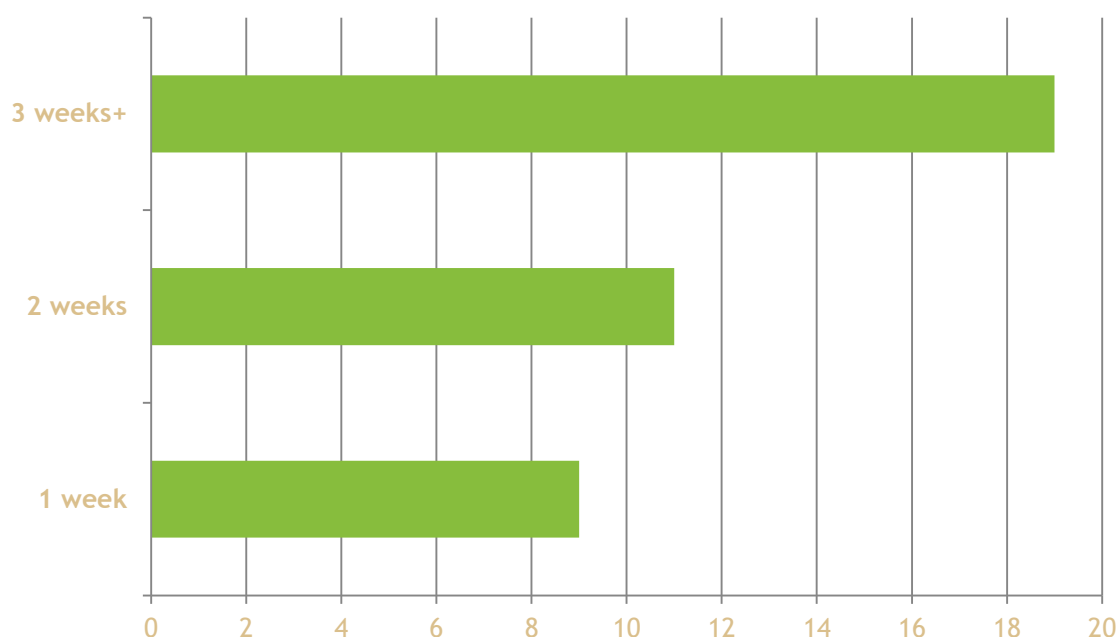
11. If there was a contact/welfare house available, was this fit for purpose?
29 responses

Some respondents stated that a welfare house was either not offered or available. Of those that were offered the use of a welfare house, some of the issues raised were:

- House unfurnished/no equipment - so families had to sit on the floor or bring their own equipment to share with others
- One welfare house for a large amount of families/SFA
- Too far from the SFA
- Spare SFA offered but had to be left at Move Out standard

AFF View: AFF appreciates that a welfare house can only be provided from empty stock and that on a large project this may be some distance from some families; however, where they are provided, they should be fit for purpose for the amount of families expected to use it.

12. How long did the works last?
39 responses



“Was left without power in kitchen for a week. Family was living on microwaveable meals. When we said this was unacceptable, was told to buy takeaways since that's what everyone else was doing. The workmen ripped out kitchen on day one and didn't come back to house until four days later”

“I was told that cooking facilities would be restored in the evening but not available in the day. However, before work commenced I spoke with building contractor/site supervisor who agreed if I used my neighbour's kitchen facilities/made other arrangements for the week, they would improve on the time expected to complete the work. End result was that kitchen refurbishment was not completed any quicker than other houses but I had no cooker for the entire two week period”

“We were allotted four boxes that we could use to put our contents in. They were neither stable nor plentiful enough for the contents of the kitchen. We were also required to return them after our kitchen was completed, so although I know I received new boxes I am also aware that others received boxes second-hand. On top of this, I had to wait almost a week for someone to retrieve them”

“A welfare kitchen was made available. It was at the other end of the street in an empty quarter. Two families at a time were to use it...it contained one cooker and no fridge. There were two tables and chairs. Saucepans, plates, etc were provided but no chopping board, knives, etc. as we are a family of five we didn't use it as it would have meant carrying raw food up the street, complete with knives, condiments, etc. Sharing a cooker with another family...all of us trying to sort out evening meals for the family seemed ludicrous which is why we didn't use it at all”

Bathroom

13. How long did the new bathroom take to fit?

16 responses

No of weeks	No of respondents
> 2 weeks	2
2 weeks	4
3 weeks	2
4 weeks	1
5 weeks	2
6 weeks+	1
Not finished	1

14. If it took more than a day to refit the bathroom, what wash facilities were you able to use?

15 responses

Some respondents stated no wash facilities were available. Of those that did have some facilities, the details were:

- Kitchen sink
- Toilet overnight
- Downstairs bathroom - for toilet and basin
- Bath but no shower

Roof

15. Did the work on the roof take place in?

4 responses

Spring/Summer 1 Autumn/Winter 3

AFF View: This is a very small number of respondents however AFF would like to see roof repairs undertaken in the summer as much as possible.

16. Do you feel that you saw an increase in your fuel bills as a result of the work on the roof?

4 responses

Yes 2 No 2

16a. How long did it take the roof to be replaced?

4 responses

3 weeks 2 4 weeks+ 2

Carpets

17. Have you had new carpets after moving into your SFA?

59 responses

Families reported that they had to dismantle and move their furniture themselves. Several families had their carpets replaced shortly after moving in, when it was clear there was an issue with the carpets but the replacement had not been actioned during the void period.

AFF View: This is an issue which families frequently bring to AFF - we would like to see improved communication between MHS, DIO and the families on this.

Boiler

18. Have you had a new boiler installed whilst living in your SFA?

59 responses

Families reported that boilers were often refitted during winter when they had broken and that this could take a considerable amount of time and meant living in SFA without heating in coldest time of the year. There were several reports of poor workmanship.

AFF View: Boilers are replaced on a lifecycle requirement however those which need to be replaced due to a breakdown during the winter months should be actioned quickly with the minimum of time delay and DIO and MHS should look at improving communication for INW's for boilers.

Windows

19. Have you had your windows replaced whilst living in your SFA?

59 responses

A few families reported that this was noisy and dirty whilst being completed.

Other refurbishments

20. If you have had any other refurbishments done on your house which you would like to comment on?

17 responses

Other work that was reported included:

- House repainted - indoor and outdoor
- Cover on water tank due to vermin infestation
- New cold water tank
- Pipes in wall fixed
- Asbestos
- Kitchen floor replaced
- Patio doors replaced
- Insulation
- New fuse box

Several families reported poor workmanship on the work completed. One family highlighted the poor quality management process by DIO in ensuring their contractors were completing their work to a good standard and that DIO relied on the families themselves to ensure things were being done properly. A couple of respondents commented that they felt unnecessary work was carried out when more urgent work was required.

“Had new kitchen lino put down a year after reporting it. I wasn’t given any assistance in moving appliances despite being on my own with kids, I had to get a guy from down the street to help me. They didn’t take the old stuff up, just laid the new stuff on top so now doors don’t close properly, threshold bars keep popping out, and appliance are sinking into the soft flooring, but I won’t call to get it fixed because I can’t face having to remove all my appliances again.....”

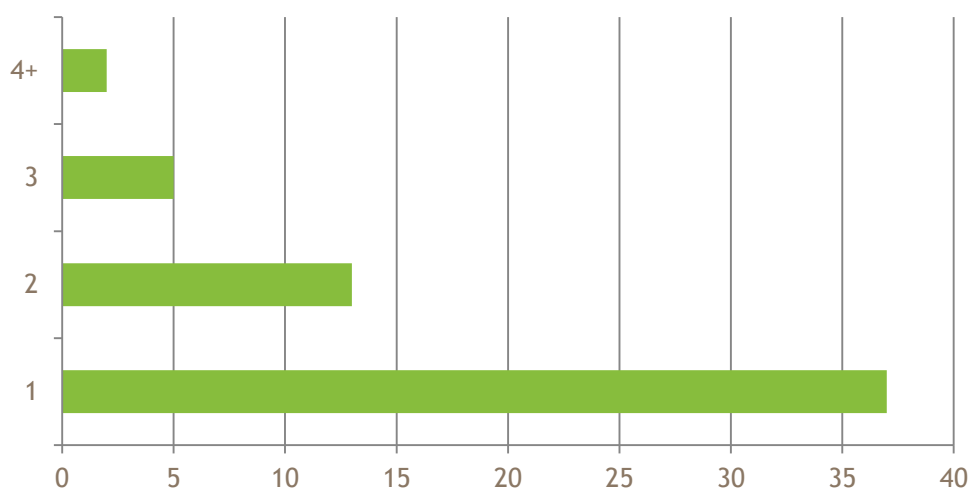
“The total lack of any quality management process from DIO allows contractors to deliver a poor service and not meet the standards of fitting that DIO have paid for. It relies on the occupier to know what should have been done and be rigorous at chasing it up. Many don’t and to be fair, the MOD pays us to be soldiers not quality control assessors for housing. The poor quality of repairs ultimately reduces the value for money achieved by MOD and reduces the effective life of the refurb”

AFF View: DIO/MHS have protocols in place to monitor the quality of the works. AFF would like to see this process reassessed and, rather than an overall project view, to have individual SFA checked on completion as a regular action.

Impact of refurbishments

21. How many SFA have you had that have been refurbished whilst living in it?

57 responses



AFF View: This demonstrates that, due to the transient nature of families, they are likely to live in more than one SFA which is due to undergo major refurbishments. This is unlike their civilian counterparts in social housing who are likely only to live in one house and will personally reap the long term benefits when work will done.

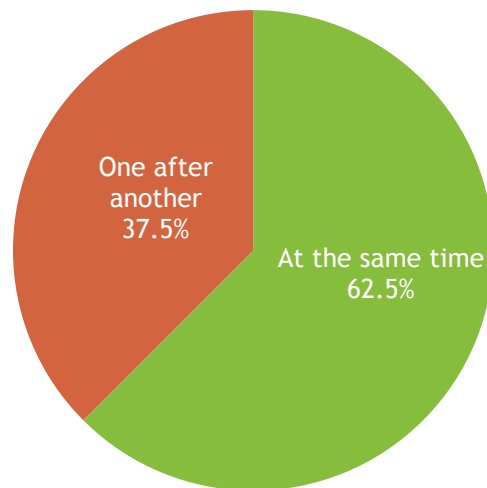
22. When you last had a refurbishment, did you have multiple works undertaken at the same time?

57 responses

Yes 28% (16) No 72% (41)

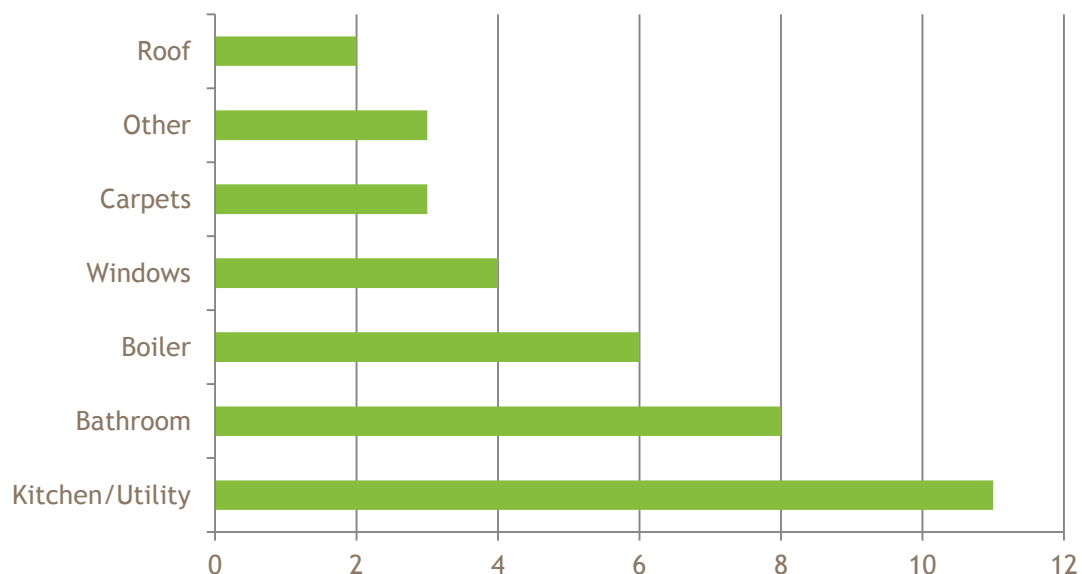
23. When you last had a refurbishment, how were the works done?

16 responses



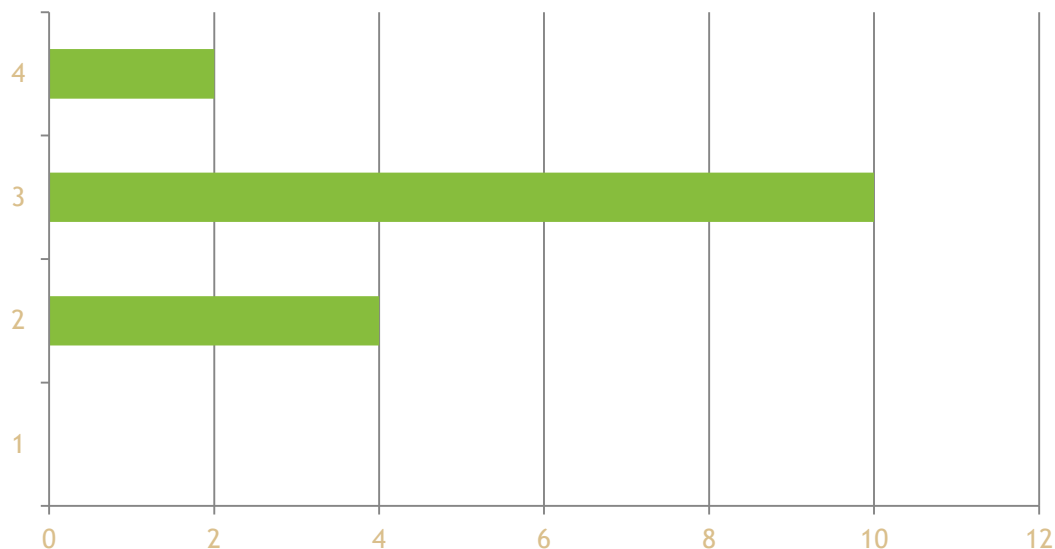
AFF View: Whilst concurrent works reduce the time taken for projects to be completed, kitchen and bathroom refurbs should only be undertaken at the same time with the agreement of the families. AFF would like to see the process clarified and a form produced for both families and the contractor to sign to say that the impact has been explained and that the family is/is not happy for the works to be done concurrently.

24. When you last had a refurbishment, what works were done?



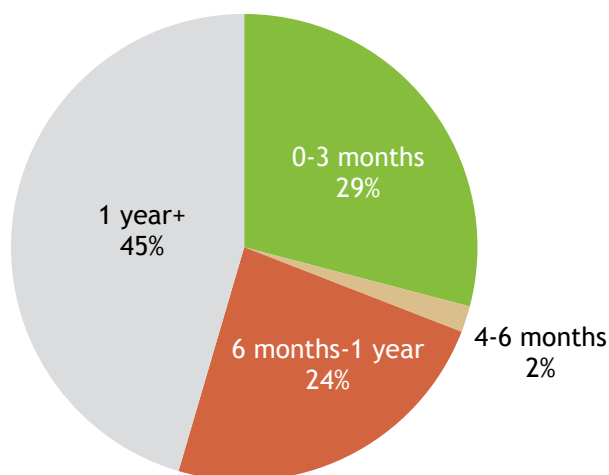
25. During your last refurbishment, how many bedrooms did your house have?

16 responses



26. When you last had a refurbishment, how long had you been in your SFA before the works started?

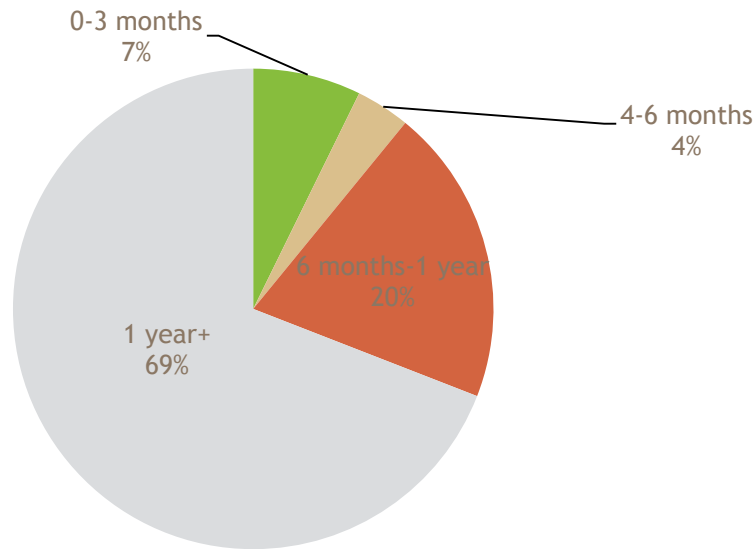
55 responses



AFF View: AFF is concerned that 29% of respondents had only been in the SFA for 0-3 months before the works started. For highly mobile families who move frequently, to have to unpack and then go through the upheaval of a refurb so soon after moving is not acceptable. AFF believes that this is a communication issue between the HASC and DIO/MHS.

27. When you last had a refurbishment, how long after the works completed did you move out of your SFA?

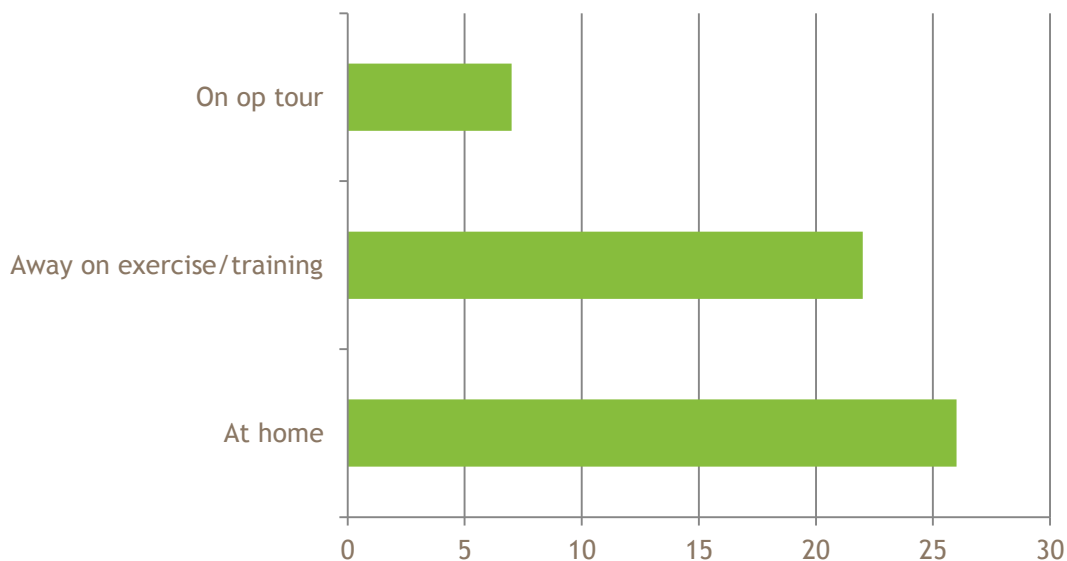
55 responses



AFF View: AFF is delighted that the figure for those moving within three months of the works is low as this shows that communications for delaying works on soon to be empty properties appears to be working.

28. When you last had a refurbishment, during the works was your soldier:

55 responses



29. When you last had a refurbishment, did you have young children at home during the day?

55 responses

Yes 53% (29) No 47% (26)

30. If yes, did the refurbishment impact on your ability to have your children at home during the day?

39 responses

Yes 59% (23) No 41% (16)

Families reported the following impacts:

- Wet paint and young children is not a good mix
- Having no toilet is very difficult for children
- High levels of noise and dust is particularly disruptive for young children/babies
- House often cold as doors were left open
- Refurbs over school holidays are particularly challenging, with families having to go out significantly more than they usually would.

“It was during the summer holidays so all four of my children (aged 5, 6, 10 and 13) were on school holidays. Despite requesting the work to be done during the 3+ weeks when I was away with the children, all the work was done when we were back at home. I had to go out for most of the day everyday as the noise, workmen and dust was too much”

31. When you last had a refurbishment, did you have any pets at home during the day?

55 responses

Yes 53% (29) **No** 47% (26)

32. If yes, did the refurbishment have any impact on your pets?

40 responses

Yes 55% (22) **No** 45% (18)

Families reported the following impacts:

- Had to contain dog in one room/area, which wasn't always easy
- Doors left open
- Dog had to go to neighbours
- Dog had to go to kennels
- Dog had to stay in garden

33. When you last had a refurbishment, were you working from home during the day?

55 responses

Yes 17% (9) **No** 84% (46)

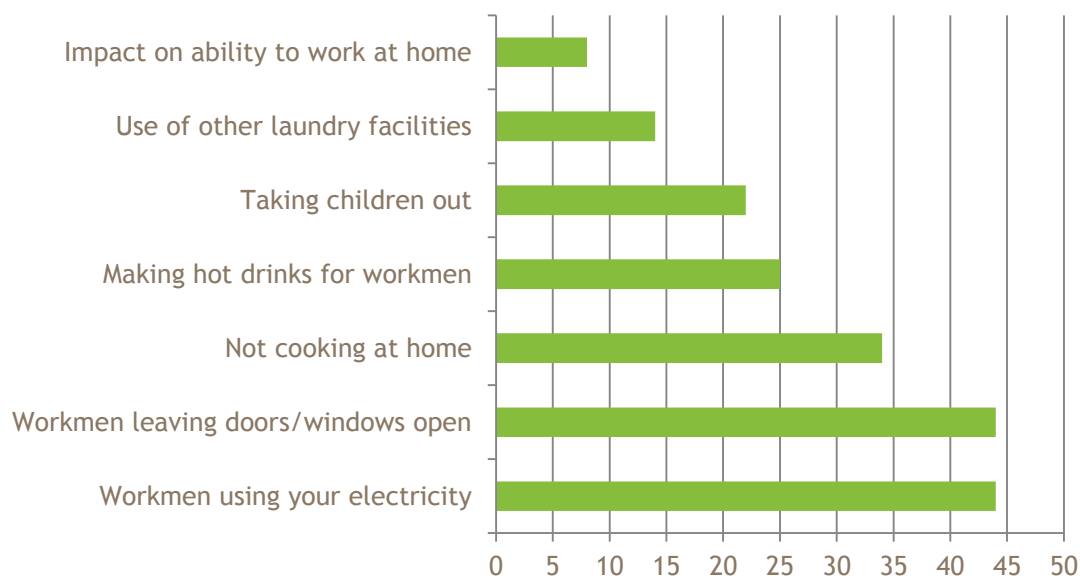
34. If yes, did the refurbishment have any impact on your work?

31 responses

Yes 29% (9) **No** 71% (22)

35. Did you incur any of the following due to the refurbishments?

31 responses



Families reported the following impacts:

- Couldn't leave workmen in house alone
- Safety issue with work equipment around children
- Workmen used family's equipment, eg vacuum cleaner and broke it
- Workmen left property unsecured
- Couldn't go out to work as doors had to be kept open
- Electricity used by workmen and credit required by MOD

“Our electricity was used throughout the entire project. We should receive a credit from the MOD on this. We also had damage on picture frames caused by the workers. When I complained, I was told off. And when I came home one night to find my kitchen window wide open (the kitchen had been completed and they were working in the bathroom), my soldier was away on exercise and I spent the night wondering if someone had been in my house who shouldn't have. When I went to the project site and demanded my keys back, the head of the project was in the house with one of the workers both smoking quite a lot and spoiling the house they were using. I was not taken seriously with my complaint and the project leaders became rude and unhelpful after I spoke to them”

36. Is there anything practical that DIO could do to make life easier when living through a refurbishment? (eg additional washing or cooking facilities provided, full clean provided after works completed, temporary downgrade of property during the works)

39 responses

Families suggested the following:

- Temporary downgrade
- Full clean after work
- Contact house for dogs
- More/higher quality amenities for cooking and washing
- Use of community centre
- Complete one property before starting another
- More communication about schedule of works

- More professional contractors
- Reasonable advance notice of work
- Refurbishment when void
- Financial compensation for use of electricity, damage to garden with scaffolding etc

“A credit for electricity on our rent would be helpful. I have had our carpets cleaned since the project and they were so dirty that I was glad I had them done.

DIO in particular should be more on top of quality control checking the people hired for these projects and maintaining a firm timeline. The projects took longer than they should have and there were days that people did not show up to work on the projects. This should have been monitored, and reacted to when I spoke to people about it”

“During larger works over more than a week temporary downgrade of the property to compensate for the increased food bills (eating out / buying extra food in as the usual cooking facilities were unavailable)”

“I did have a temporary downgrade of the property and our rent was reduced due to the works. A full clean would have been helpful as at best, the clean that was carried out by the sub-contractors after works were done was not up to much. I did end up cleaning myself also after they had full completed the refurbishment to my kitchen. Also the entire house was very dusty as along with the refurbishment to the kitchen they were installing a new electrical carbon monoxide detector, and also new smoke alarms so were having to carry out drilling works. On one of the days I came back to the house to find as they works were getting done in the kitchen and the electrician was on ladders at my front door working on the electrical box and smoke detector, it was very difficult for me to get into my own property. I would also like to point out that at no time during the works did workmen turn up when they were supposed to according to the list that was taped to my kitchen window, e.g. coming home one day to go into the kitchen as I was told no workmen would be in one of the days and nearly stepping in floor screed that had been laid whilst I had been out of my home. On occasion I did have to make contact with the site supervisor to check who would be in my property that day if any workmen at all and what noise I could expect on certain days. I had been promised all drilling would be done on the one day to find coming back home this had not been the case, and I had made them aware that I would be out that day to allow them to do so, so as to limit the noise levels for my baby. All in all couldn't wait for them to finish in my property and to have my house back with my husband being in Afghanistan and a four month old baby, and with the stress of the works it was all very upsetting”

AFF View: AFF feels that an automatic, temporary downgrade for the duration of the project works (not just individual SFA) would go some way to ameliorate the upheaval and impact felt by families. We would also like to see a full clean (including carpets) at the end of each project for all areas which the workmen had access to.

AFF also feels that whilst communication between DIO, MHS and the Occupants is improving there is more work to be done.

In the new year AFF will be advertising for a volunteer on each current refurbishment project who will report back on standard and impact of the overall works done - this information will then be shown to DIO and MHS in order to help them have more information to determine those aspects which work well and those which need to be improved on. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer keep an eye out on the AFF website.