



homes, communities, cultures

Aids & Adaptations Policy and Procedure

Version #:	Date:	Summary of Changes
Version 5		
Version 4		
Version 3	December 2006	Modification to tenant satisfaction questions
Version 2	October 2006	Merged and takes into account different LAs
Version 1	February 2006	

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Aids & Adaptations Policy & Procedure



Introduction

Many people living in their own home find that their personal circumstances change and they can no longer live comfortably or safely within their existing arrangements.

Connect Housing aims to positively address the aspirations of disabled people who wish to live within the community.

All tenants have a statutory right to access services relating to the provision of aids and adaptations to their homes, through their local authority. Government guidance on aids and adaptations states that local authorities should seek to establish agreements with local housing associations regarding the provision and funding of such services. The Housing Corporation expects housing associations to provide services responsive to tenants needs in this area. Connect Housing has a track record of working in partnership with its local authorities to provide a range of aids and adaptations services to its tenants.

Following the formation of Connect, policies and procedures in relation to aids and adaptation services have been reviewed, with the aim of introducing a company-wide policy that will ensure tenants receive an equitable range of services regardless of where they live. This has been a significant challenge given the influence on these services by the respective local authority, all of which have different arrangements for such services.

This policy revision has been informed by the guidance contained in "Minor Adaptations Without Delay" published by the Housing Corporation and College of Occupational Therapists, in January 2006. A self-assessment against the criteria for judging good practice in the guide shows that Connect's new policy and procedure as set out below meets all but 2 of the 13 criteria. Those which it does not meet are the recommendation that minor works should be supplied within 7 working days (proposed standard is 95% within 14 calendar days) and

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that the system is culturally sensitive (currently not able to demonstrate this). These will be areas for further development.

Overarching Policy Statement

Connect Housing is committed to providing an excellent level of service to all of its tenants. We understand that over time tenants physical health may alter and adaptations to property may be required to enable tenants to remain in their own homes. Connect will consider all requests for assistance in this respect equitably and expediently, in order that tenants can remain as independent and comfortable as reasonably possible in their home.

Resources

Connect has allocated a budget of £60,000 (capital) and £20,000 (revenue) in 2006/07 for the provision of aids and adaptations in tenants homes.

This budget is supplemented by local authority funds for the provision of Aids and Adaptations. The arrangements for such funding varies between local authorities, as detailed in Appendix 1.

The staff involved in the provision of aids and adaptations include:

- Assets Officer: A&A administration
- Operations and Assets Manager: Management of A&A service
- Director of Regeneration: Decisions relating the funding of projects
- Housing Support Worker (Disabilities): advice and support for applicants
- Contracts Officers: on site technical support and quality monitoring

Each month, an Aids and Adaptations Group (comprising the above except the Contracts Officers) meet to monitor progress on schemes, approve new schemes and monitor budget expenditure.

A&A performance is reported to Management Team on a quarterly basis and to Board annual in the Regeneration Services review.

Nature of Aids and Adaptations

Aids and adaptations vary enormously, from the fitting of a handrail next to the front door to constructing purpose-built properties designed around the needs of a particular disabled person. The important factor is that the works are client-focused.

Typically, the more common adaptations carried out for Connect tenants include: handrails, lever taps, door entry systems, over-bath showers, walk-in showers and stairlifts.

Getting the scheme right will require the input of some or all of the following:

- the disabled person (and their carer/family)
- the Occupational Therapist
- the Housing Support Worker
- the local authority grants department / adaptations agency
- the contractor

Experience of this work indicates that significant benefits in service quality are to be gained by using specialist contractors with experience and expertise in disabled adaptations, rather than run-of-the-mill plumbers/joiners.

Key Service Objectives

- Connect will treat all tenants equitably regardless of their needs or where they live;

- Connect should establish a streamlined value for money service that is responsive to clients' needs, and provides the necessary adaptations with the minimum of fuss;
- Connect should seek to establish formal protocols with all its local authority partners in relation to aids and adaptations;
- Connect will promote its aids and adaptations service to all tenants;
- Connect should seek to avoid a "waiting list" for aids and adaptations;
- Connect should seek to maintain control on aids and adaptations budgets;
- Connect should have a clear policy on the type of aids and adaptations it will fund, and those that it will not, or refer to the local authority;

Aids and Adaptations Policy:

1. Connect will seek to assist all tenants requiring aids or adaptations where these are necessary to enable the tenant or a member of their household to live independently, or to otherwise ease the circumstances surrounding caring for a disabled family member.
2. Connect will consider requests direct from tenants, and will act on referrals received from Occupational Therapists or other suitably qualified professionals. Where Connect staff consider that the needs of the tenant are complex or outside the capabilities of staff to properly assess, they will encourage the tenant to seek suitable professional advice;
3. Connect will normally seek Occupational Health advice through the local authority or NHS, but may seek paid consultancy advice in exceptional circumstances;
4. Connect will not normally fund the following: equipment normally provided by social services, mobility scooters, alterations or storage to accommodate mobility scooters. As a guide, Connect will follow the eligibility criteria for DFGs and the advice contained in "Minor Adaptations

without Delay". Connect will not normally refuse tenant requests to provide, at their own expense, such equipment or facilities.

5. Where a request falls outside works which Connect will fund, staff will assist the tenant in identifying alternative funding for the work (eg. Social fund)
6. Connect will fund entirely "Minor" adaptations, meaning those that can reasonably be completed for up to £1,000. Common minor adaptations might normally include: lever taps, grab rails, alterations to steps and paths, over-bath showers, intercoms and door entry systems, care-ring equipment.
7. Connect will not ordinarily contribute to "Major" adaptations costing over £1,000 where these are eligible for a statutory Disabled Facilities Grant. Instead, Connect will assist tenants in making a Tenant's Application for a DFG through the local authority. Such schemes would include: wet floor showers, stair lifts, through floor lifts, major ramps and extensions.
8. Where the Tenant's Test of Resources (means test) requires that the tenant makes a contribution to the cost of the grant works, Connect may, at its discretion, offer to pay towards or all of this contribution on behalf of the tenant. Such decisions will be taken by the Director of Regeneration or Chief Executive, and will take account of the nature of the adaptation. Connect will not normally contribute unless the adaptation would add significant value to the property (eg. an extension)
9. Connect will, subject to budget availability, contribute "top-up" funding towards the cost of major schemes where the cost of the works exceeds the maximum grant of £25,000.
10. Where Connect is carrying out planned maintenance works (such as the bathroom replacements) it will aim to provide a facility that is suitable for the tenant's needs, where that differs from the standard provision. Where additional costs are incurred as a result of this higher provision, these will be met by the A&A budget.

11. Requests for the repair or replacement of adaptations previously carried out will be treated as repair requests and not as new aids and adaptations.
12. Where an adaptation requires ongoing regular servicing or maintenance by Connect, the Association will make a service charge for this work to cover the associated costs. Connect will not seek to recover depreciation on adaptations.
13. Where an adapted property becomes available for letting, Connect will seek to identify prospective tenants from the waiting list that require such adaptations. It is not normally practical or efficient to remove, store and re-use equipment in different locations, due to the small number of such occurrences and the varied nature of the Association's stock. Therefore Connect will not seek to do this.

Minor Adaptations Procedure for works costing up to £1,000

1. All requests for adaptations should be recorded on Form A&A1. Any relevant accompanying documentation, such as tenant's letter or OT referral should be attached. The form should be passed as soon as possible to the Assets Officer, who will record the information on the A&A Database/Spreadsheet.
2. The Assets Officer will consider the request against the eligibility criteria set out in the Policy. The Assets Officer will contact the tenant to seek clarification of any issues. In cases in which there appear to be complex needs or the tenant is unsure of what adaptations to request, the Assets Officer will ask the appropriate Support Worker to visit and discuss the issues with the tenant.
3. Where the Support Worker is concerned about multiple or complex needs, they will suggest that the tenant seeks the advice of an Occupational Therapist. The Support Worker will make the necessary referral, with the tenant's permission.
4. The Assets Officer is authorised to order, without further permission, works up to the value of £500 where the total values of orders in that calendar

- Was the contractor clean and tidy during their visit?
- The tenant's ethnicity

The Assets Officer will record the answers to these questions on the relevant spreadsheet, and will update the A&A database/spreadsheet with the date work was completed.

10. 10% of works under £500 in value will be quality checked as a routine by the Contracts Team along with other repairs orders raised. The Assets Officer will details of works costing more than £500 to the Contracts Team for a quality inspection to be carried out.
11. The Assets Officer will check the invoices for completed works, and pass them to the Operations and Assets Manager for authorisation. The invoices will then be passed to Finance for payment. The Assets Officer will update QL / UH and the A&A database/spreadsheet.
12. The Assets Officer will arrange for Promaster to be updated with details of material adaptations. These would include overbath showers, intercoms and ramps. It is not necessary to update Promaster with details of grab rails, handrails and lever taps.
13. All orders for minor works placed during the previous month will be reported to the Aids and Adaptations Group at the following meeting.

Major Adaptations costing over £1,000

1. Connect may receive requests or notifications for Major Adaptations at one of a number of points along the Disabled Facilities Grant application process.
2. Where a tenant requests a major adaptation direct from Connect, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Support Worker, who will discuss making a referral to an Occupational Therapist with the tenant. During this discussion, if there are any minor adaptations that can be carried out in the short term, these will be processed through the Minor Adaptations procedure.

3. Where the Association receives notification that a tenant is pursuing an application for a DFG, prior to Formal Application stage, the details will be logged on the A&A database/spreadsheet, and a file created.
4. The Assets Officer will contact the tenant to offer support through the application process, including help with obtaining estimates if required. Some local authorities provide an agency service that carries out this function on behalf of the tenant. The Assets Officer will ask the tenant to keep Connect informed of progress with the application, and in particular when work begins and is completed. All new schemes will be reported to the following A&A Group meeting.
5. When the Association receives a request to complete an Owners Certificate and Certificate of Ownership, the Assets Officer will first check the property status on QL/UH to confirm ownership. The forms will be passed to the Director of Regeneration for signature, and returned to the local authority concerned. A copy will be retained on the file.
6. Where a tenant requests financial assistance from Connect with respect to a means tested contribution, this will be referred to the Director of Regeneration for a decision.
7. Where the local authority requests that the Association provides "top up" funding for a project costing in excess of the £25,000 grant limit, this will be referred to the Director of Regeneration for a decision.
8. The Assets Officer will contact the tenant shortly after the target completion date to confirm that the works have been completed, and will ask:
 - How happy is the tenant with the adaptation and does it make their life easier?
 - Did the contractor make an appointment?
 - Did the contractor arrive on time?
 - Did the contractor show identification?
 - Was the contractor courteous?

- Was the contractor clean and tidy during their visit?
- The tenant's ethnicity

The Assets Officer will record the answers to these questions on the relevant spreadsheet, and will update the A&A database/spreadsheet with the date work was completed.

Major adaptations are often carried out by contractors selected by the tenant or the local authority, and so Connect has less control over standards. However, where the tenant reports problems, Connect will report these to the local authority, and take up any outstanding issues with the contractor on the tenant's behalf as required.

9. Upon completion, the Assets Officer will arrange for Promaster to be updated with information regarding the adaptations carried out.
10. The local authority will carry out quality control checks on all DFG schemes. Connect is satisfied as to the general thoroughness of these quality checks and therefore will not duplicate this work by carrying out its own, unless the tenant reports particular problems that warrant further investigation.

Planned Maintenance and Aids and Adaptations

1. The Association is carrying out increasing levels of planned maintenance and major repairs. Implications for aids and adaptations may occur in two main ways:
 - where existing adaptations need to be replaced as part of a programme replacing, for example, kitchens or bathrooms.
 - Where a programme to replace, eg. bathrooms, affects a tenant who would benefit from an adapted facility rather than the standard provision.

2. Where an adaptation needs to be replaced. The Contracts Officer will ask the Assets Officer to obtain quotations from appropriate specialist A&A contractors (in line with Standing Orders).
3. Where a new adaptation is appropriate, the Contracts Officer will ask the Assets Officer to obtain a report from an Occupational Therapist (a private consultant OT may be used for this purpose). The Assets Officer will use the report to obtain quotations from appropriate specialist A&A contractors (in line with Standing Orders).
4. In both cases the Assets Officer will create a file and record the scheme on the A&A database/spreadsheet. Details will be reported to the following A&A Group meeting.
5. In both cases, the Assets Officer will liaise with the Contracts Team to arrange for the work to be done in parallel with the main programme of work on that scheme.
6. In both cases the Contracts Team will be responsible for on-site supervision and quality control. The Assets Team will incorporate the A&A work into the overall customer satisfaction survey for the programme.
7. In both cases, the cost of the equivalent standard installation will be charged to the programme budget for the adapted property. Any excess costs associated with the specialist adaptations will be charged to the A&A CAPITAL budget.

Service Standards

Connect will promote the Aids and Adaptations Service through "Get Connected" the tenants' newsletter, through leaflets, and through face-to-face promotion by staff.

Connect will provide training to all customer facing staff so that they understand the purpose and key policies of the Aids and Adaptations Service, and can provide basic advice and signposting to customers.

Connect staff will treat every request for aids and adaptations with care and sensitivity.

Connect will employ high quality contractors to do aids and adaptations work that have the specific and relevant expertise and experience.

A tenant requesting very minor adaptations (eg. A grab rail or lever taps) will have these works ordered straight away. We will aim to complete this type of work within 14 days.

A tenant requesting more significant items will be asked to make an appointment for a member of staff to visit to discuss their needs. Where Connect can agree to fund adaptations directly, we will aim to have these works completed within 12 weeks. Where the works would be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, we will assist the tenant in making an application.

Performance Standards:

Minor works (taps and grabrails):

from request to completion – 95% less than 2 weeks

Minor works (showers and ramps): from request to completion

– Average 8 weeks 95% less than 12 weeks

DFGs (authority only required):

from receipt of forms to forms returned

- Average 1 week 95% less than 2 weeks

DFGs (full application required):

From receipt of forms to application submitted

- Average 5 weeks 95% less than 8 weeks

DFGs (full application required):

From grant approval to works completed

- Average 14 weeks 95% within 18 weeks

Monthly Aids and Adaptations meetings

Monitoring and allocation of funds will be carried out through monthly meetings that will be attended by:

- Housing Support Worker
- Assets Officer
- Operations and Assets Manager
- Director of Regeneration

The Assets Officer will outline to the meeting details of new applications and any issues/problems with existing schemes already approved.

This information will include:

- The referral form
- any correspondence/supporting letters/OT referrals

The Assets Officer will also provide the meeting with a spreadsheet summarising the current application list, including estimated costs of the work required and performance data against the service standards.

The expenditure for the year and the current waiting list will be reviewed, and funds will be allocated to meet current demand.

Performance will be reported to Management Team on a quarterly basis, and to Board as part of the annual Regeneration Services review.

Contractors

Connect will only use contractors from the Association's Approved List to carry out Aids and Adaptations work which it orders directly. The specialist nature of the work, and the particularly vulnerabilities characteristic of many amongst the

client group for this type of work, require contractors who are experienced and have expertise in this area.

Local authorities generally maintain an approved list of contractors, who meet its criteria for grant work. Connect will seek to identify contractors from such lists for A&A work, subject to them passing additional vetting criteria in order to be added to the approved list. These criteria are as follows:

- Satisfactory evidence of public and employer's liability insurance
- Satisfactory evidence of tax certification
- A Schedule 1 declaration
- Two satisfactory references
- A copy of their equal opportunities policy, or if they do not have one, a copy of The Ridings' policy will be provided with instruction that it shall be followed.

Selecting Contractors and Obtaining Estimates

The following guidelines shall apply to obtaining estimates for Aids and Adaptations:

Only estimates from contractors on the Association's Approved list will be considered.

- Small works of a routine maintenance nature/specialist electrics – direct order to repairs/specialist contractor from list
- More specialist works, value <£3,000 – 1 estimate (if satisfied as to VFM)
- Contract value >£3,000 – 2 estimates
- Contract value >£10,000 – formal tendering process (consultant likely to be involved for major building works)

For example, where alterations are required to a door-step or and handrail needs to be installed, this might be given to a general maintenance contractor. Similarly, the installation of an overbath shower. However, where that shower installation also involves the fixing of a shower seat and grab rails, it may be appropriate to use the specialist contractor.

The aim will be to ensure the work is carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible, whilst saving the specialist contractors, whose time is at a premium, for the specialist tasks.

Right to Succession

Members of a tenant's household have the right to take over a tenancy if the tenant dies and they have been living with them for more than one year. In the event that a tenant dies and the property has had significant adaptations carried out which are no longer required by the surviving household members, the Association would seek to negotiate with the surviving family members the offer of alternative accommodation. If this is unsuccessful, and a person who needs the adaptations requires the accommodation, the association will consider applying for possession of the property under Ground 9.

If a tenant dies whilst on the waiting list, the application for adaptations will be withdrawn unless another member of the household requires the same adaptation. This would require a reassessment from an Occupational Therapist to confirm this.

Appendix 1

	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds
Major/Minor works split	All schemes costing less than £1000 are classed as Minor Works and are not treated as DFG. Schemes costing >£1000 are treated as Tenant Application DFG. Currently do not operate landlord DFG.	All schemes costing less than £1000 are classed as Minor Works and are not treated as DFG. Schemes costing >£1000 are treated as Tenant Application DFG. Currently do not operate landlord DFG.	All schemes costing less than £1000 are classed as Minor Works and are not treated as DFG. Schemes costing >£1000 are treated as Tenant Application DFG or Landlord DFG
Nature of Service	Adaptations Agency manages all schemes.	No Adaptations agency. Client can claim fees towards agency support.	Mixed. Adaptations agency carries out some schemes. Other schemes administered by Connect.
Funding agreement	None. Local authority writes adhoc requests for contribution to individual schemes	None. Local authority writes adhoc requests for contribution to individual schemes.	Connect pays for all minor adaptations costing <£1000. Connect pays 40% towards Landlord application DFGs
OT input	OTs refer all schemes to Adaptations agency	OTs refer all schemes to Adaptations service	OTs refer Minor schemes direct to Connect. Major schemes referred to Adaptations service
Tenant requests	Referred to Social Services	Referred to Social Services	Minor works – assessed by Connect Staff and works ordered as appropriate (some referrals also come direct from OTs) Major works – referred to Social Services
Contractor arrangements (Minor Works)	Adaptations service orders direct through local contractors	Adaptations service orders direct through local contractors	Connect orders through local contractors

	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds
Contractor Arrangements (DFGs)	Applicant gets two quotes for application. Stairlifts ordered direct through partner contractor	Agency gets two quotes for application. Stairlifts ordered direct through partner contractor	Agency schemes: works ordered through partner contractors Non agency schemes: applicant/Connect gets two quotes for application.
Lift maintenance	Local authority maintains all lifts installed by Adaptations Agency under grant	Local authority maintains all lifts installed and funded by WYHA (where eligibility has been agreed)	Connect responsible for all lift maintenance.
Timescales (as at May 2006)	OT assessment: <24 weeks Grant survey: - Fast track: 90 days - High: < 6 months - Medium: < 8 months	OT assessment: 18 weeks Grant survey: - Genuine Urgent Need: - Other:	OT assessment: varies but can be < Grant survey: variable, but can be <
Commentary	Discussions with the Adaptations Service in Calderdale indicate that they would welcome Connect agreeing to fund minor adaptations, rather than rely on the somewhat ad-hoc arrangements currently in place.	Discussions with the local authority grant department indicate that they would welcome Connect agreeing to fund minor adaptations.	Nature of the service varies according to where you live, as the Adaptations Agency does not currently cover the whole city. Agreement regarding part funding of DFGs is not universally applied, and a significant proportion of schemes come through as tenant applications. Minor adaptation referral system appears to work well. Additional support provided by HSW (Disabilities) is invaluable.

APPENDIX 2:

Responsibilities Within the A&A Process

Housing Support Worker (HSW)

1. Providing advice for tenants, and assistance with completing forms or making referrals to social services or grant bodies.
2. Advising colleagues on particular needs of tenants to inform works specifications.

Assets Officer

1. To be the first point of contact for enquiries from tenants and OT's regarding aids and adaptations.
2. To liaise with the tenants regarding difficulties with the A&A process, e.g. OT do not recommend any work to be done, Connect unable to proceed with work recommended etc..
3. To administer the applications list and collate information from Occupational Therapists, LA, the contractor, Connect Finance Department, the HSW and tenants.
4. to make decisions within delegated authorities and policy guidelines concerning requests for minor adaptations
5. To liaise with Housing Services Advisors to ascertain the status of the tenancy
6. To prepare and regularly update a spreadsheet detailing the progress of A&A applications for consideration at monthly A & A meetings.
7. To liaise with the local authority departments regarding applications for DFGs.
8. To ensure that all DFG forms are completed and signed by relevant parties.
9. To obtain estimates as required for A&A works

10. To keep tenants and referral agencies informed of progress of individual cases.
11. To undertake tenant satisfaction surveys and collate responses.
12. To ensure Promaster is updated with relevant information regarding A&A works completed
13. To collate statistical information to monitor the expenditure of the A & A budget
14. To provide information and support to the Management Team and Staff of the Association regarding Aids & Adaptations.
15. To co-ordinate all works and be the first point of contact for contractors
16. To ensure that VAT certificates are completed as required
17. On completion of work to ensure that guarantees are secured
18. To inform the Technical Contracts Manager of maintenance and service requirements
19. To maintain records for each adaptation on site.
20. To refer projects as required for quality inspection on completion of works

Contracts Officer

1. to assist with liaison with contractors on-site and resolving technical issues
2. to undertake quality control checks of completed schemes, and report findings to the Assets Officer.

Operations and Assets Manager

1. to provide day-to-day management of the A&A service
2. to take decisions concerning applications falling outside the Assets Officer's delegated authority but within policy guidelines.

Director of Regeneration

1. To have overall responsibility for budget management and DFG policy and reporting to Management Team and Board.
2. To advise on technical issues relating to the adaptation of properties.
3. To take decisions on schemes that fall outside policy guidelines.

Appendix 3:

Risk Management

RISK	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	CONTROL MEASURE
Lack of appropriate contractors	Unable to deliver aids and adaptations in reasonable time, increasing risk and dissatisfaction for tenants	Review contractor performance regularly and ensure sufficient contractors on list who deliver to required performance standards. Contractor approval process incorporates quality checks.
Insufficient funds for aids and adaptations	Unable to deliver aids and adaptations in reasonable time, increasing risk and dissatisfaction for tenants	Expenditure monitored against budget on a monthly basis, reports to MT quarterly.
Tenant becomes distressed about time to complete adaptations	Tenant anxiety and dissatisfaction with service	Clear service standards and expectations established at beginning of process. Updates at each stage of process, and at no more than 6 week intervals.
Contractor does not complete job satisfactorily	Dissatisfied tenant Repeat visits and work orders	100% post completion tenant satisfaction assessment. 10% post completion inspection by Connect staff (100% on new contractors carrying out Minor Works) 100% post completion inspection of DFGs by LA staff
Invoice paid without work being completed satisfactorily	Difficulty in getting work completed, and paperwork sorted for grant claim	No payment to be authorised until LA has passed work (DFGs only), all paperwork has been provided, and tenant has indicated that they are satisfied with the work.

RISK	POTENTIAL OUTCOME	CONTROL MEASURE
Scheme altered without OT/LA approval	Scheme does not meet tenant needs. Scheme completion delayed. Additional costs incurred. Grant jeopardised.	No changes made to DFG schedule without approval of LA. No changes to Minor Works OT referral without OT approval.
Scheme initiated regardless of adverse tenancy issues	Costs incurred and works carried out unnecessarily	Potential schemes referred to Housing Services Advisors, and not progressed until cleared.
Association does not secure value for money in delivering schemes	A&A budget not used to best effect, and delivery of other schemes affected	2 quotes always sought for schemes over £3,000. Quotes for smaller schemes assessed according to VFM prior to order being placed.
Schemes that technically not feasible	Unnecessary costs incurred	A&A Group considers all OT referrals prior to scheme approval.
Delay in getting OT referral	Tenant waiting for works of a minor nature that would be of obvious and immediate benefit.	HSW to consider urgent minor works while awaiting OT report.
Carrying out work without OT report	Incorrect or insufficient work carried out which does not adequately meet tenant needs	Only urgent works resulting in obvious and immediate benefit to the tenant may be authorised without an OT referral. If further complex needs are present a referral from the OT MUST be pending.
Contractor does not complete work	Connect incurs additional costs in completing work	Payment not made until scheme satisfactorily completed (other than on larger schemes where consultant's involved).