



Death of the DLO

The days of the housing association direct labour organisation are over.

It's a mantra I've repeated since joining ForWorks in November 2014 – a business that is part of the ForViva Group.

Yes, like many similar organisations, ForWorks was born from the repairs and maintenance division of a housing association, City West Housing Trust in Salford.

But that is in our past, and we have taken significant strides to move on from those early days.

Today we are a construction company in our own right. That is how we are known, and we have worked incredibly hard to achieve that status.

We are not 'dipping our toe into the market' and trying to find our role in what is already a crowded sector. We do not exist as a vehicle for saving tax. We are a business with a purpose and a vision.

We are building homes. We work with clients outside of the housing sector. We win contracts and deliver a great service across the North West of England.

Our reputation now speaks for itself in the regions where we work.

We know our profits will go to fulfilling the social purpose of the wider ForViva group and delivering more affordable homes – but surely that is an incentive to make more profit, not to simply settle for what we've got and remain in our comfort zone.

Part of the reason for the ForWorks success story has been our efforts in shedding the DLO tag.

We were quick to face facts and accept that the DLO label limited our ability to grow as an organisation. It closed off large portions of the market and meant that we were only considered for certain types of projects. It also limited the geographical areas we wanted to expand in.

As a fully-fledged construction company that is committed to investing in training our staff and improving systems and processes, we know we can give the traditional players a run for their money.

The market is buoyant and there is a very clear message from Government to build more homes of all tenure. We know we can match the best of what is out there to deliver on that ambition.

With an increasing number of former repairs divisions embarking on the same journey, it is vital that landlords give organisations like ForWorks the opportunity to show their potential.

We need the sector to be supportive and put these newly established construction firms on a level playing field with other long-standing contractors.

For housing associations this is a great opportunity to boost competition and drive up quality. But that will only happen if more contractors are given their chance to show what they can do.

About the author

Steve Parrington is Managing Director of ForWorks. A highly-skilled practitioner with over 38 years' experience in the construction industry, Steve has a wealth of knowledge in social housing - refurbishment and new build - including multi-storey blocks, non-traditional housing and large scale regeneration.

With considerable experience of leading diverse and complex construction projects, he is now responsible for maintaining high performance at ForWorks, leading the organisation's commercial growth aspirations to become a contractor and employer of choice.



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