

The history of NHBC

NHBC was established 70 years ago as a non-profit distributing company, and its primary purpose then, as it is now, was to help raise standards in the new housebuilding industry and provide consumer protection.

NHBC began life as the Housing Improvement Association in 1936 which was established by a group of builders with the object of giving homeowners a fair deal at a time when "jerry building" was a national concern. Originally the concept of Sir Jonah Walker-Smith, then director of the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, the objectives of the association were:

To encourage and promote a high standard of design, workmanship and materials in house building in the United Kingdom and to take all steps and measures requisite to that end.

The measures the company installed to tackle bad building practices included: the establishment of a register of qualified house-builders, a model specification for homes - adopting and revising this where necessary - and creating the administration to oversee the inspection and certification of homes.

In November 1964, with the increase in homes being built in the private sector, parliamentary concern over the standard of housing was growing. There were various possibilities before Government, including the introduction of statutory control of the house-building industry by registering compulsorily all builders and subjecting them to a much tighter system of local authority inspection. The industry was apprehensive about the proposals and thought that this might result in greater bureaucracy, expense and delay.

At the same time the Building Societies Association (BSA) was also concerned about the standards of house building and was considering ways they might safeguard their interests. As a result of the concerns expressed at the time and the acknowledgement of the improvements made by NHBC, the Government, the BSA and official bodies agreed to support the Home Improvements Association's (NHBC's) scheme in place of any form of compulsory system.

In response, in 1965 the Home Improvement Association introduced a ten-year warranty program to rectify any defects in structural parts of the home during years three to ten. This new cover was called the Buildmark warranty.

In 1967 The Home Improvement Association changed its name to the 'National House Builders Registration Council' and in the same year a new Council was formed of 45 members in England and Wales. The Council was representative of all the bodies recognised by the Government as being the official voice of their particular interest in the building of a new home.

Then in 1968 the BSA took the significant step of advising that no mortgage advances would be made on newly built homes without a certificate from NHBC.

NHBC changed its name to its present name - National House-Building Council (NHBC) - in 1973 and in 1985 NHBC became the first Approved Inspector to carry out

building control. This was based on the New Building Act, which was aimed to privatise the building control service as well as to promote performance-based standards.

Today, as an Approved Inspector, NHBC currently provides around 50% of residential building control in England and Wales. In 2003 NHBC started to offer building control on commercial developments such as Tesco supermarket outlets.

Today approximately 180,000 new homes are registered for Buildmark warranty cover each year and approximately 85% of new homes are covered by the warranty in the UK.