

Customer Involvement Strategy

Impact Assessment 2005/06

Introduction

During the course of the last year, Three Rivers Housing Association has thoroughly reviewed the way in which we consult our customers. In doing so, a new Customer Involvement Strategy has been launched that brings together all of our aims, current activities and future plans within one corporate document. The success of this Strategy will be monitored closely to assess the impact that consultation has had on:-

- Shaping service delivery
- Increasing customer satisfaction
- Improving communication
- Strengthening performance
- Enhancing efficiency

The Customer Involvement Strategy is central to a range of activity undertaken throughout the last year. This Impact Assessment details the impact that this activity has had in influencing service and policy in relation to all of our customers:-

- Tenants
- Residents
- Housing applicants
- Supported housing clients
- Contractors & consultants

Impact of our involvement activity

- Tenants handbook – the Tenants Advisory Committee (TAC) helped reshape and change the content of our tenants handbook, incorporating all relevant publications and leaflets within one pack. This pack has been welcomed by tenants as more useful and informative than previously.
- DLO expansion – during consultation regarding the possible expansion of the DLO, the TAC expressed a clear preference for more services to be provided by the in-house team rather than external contractors. The in-house team were considered to be more visible, recognisable and provided a better standard of customer care and efficiency. The option to expand the DLO was pursued, with further expansion currently under consideration. The impact of this decision among tenants is evident from

the increased satisfaction that residents have with DLO services compared to external contractors. Cost efficiency can be measured through the fact that the average cost of a DLO job is £35 compared to nearly £102 per job for external contractors. This equated to an efficiency saving of £183k (the difference between the DLO undertaking work rather than it having been undertaken by external contractors) over the first 9 months of 2005/06.

- Managing anti-social behaviour – this has been a key concern for our customers and the appointment of an Anti-social behaviour co-ordinator is in direct response to that concern and our commitment to provide safe housing and neighbourhoods for all our customers.
- Broadening our services to Older persons – changes in Supporting People funding arrangements gave us the opportunity to review the services we provided to older persons. Rather than a purely reactive warden service it was felt that a comprehensive service could be provided to older persons that considered all their needs and requirements to maintain independent living.
- Serial Maintenance Contract procurement – TAC members have been involved in contractor interviews with the primary role of ensuring that contractors maintain comprehensive customer care policies.
- Equality & Diversity – a tenant board member has been part of the working group driving forward the Associations E & D strategy.
- Annual Residents Conference – the TAC helped reshape the format of the conference which, in 2005, was held in a local football stadium, had live entertainment, celebrity guest and included residents' awards. In doing so, the number of residents attending the conference doubled over the previous year.
- Two yearly customer satisfaction survey – This is split into separate surveys of clients in mainstream and supported housing and collects information on customer satisfaction rates with existing services and their priorities for future improvements. The 2005 survey indicated that for mainstream tenants, some 91% were satisfied with service while this figure reached 98% for supported housing customers.
- Satisfaction surveys – these are held across a range of service areas enabling us to improve our performance still further in line with customer wishes:-
 - Repairs. This is undertaken for every repair and gauges the quality of the service delivered from reporting a repair through to the work being completed. It has enabled us to identify contractor performance in terms of repair quality, timeliness, cleanliness etc and the improvement in such performance is borne out by our monitoring statistics
 - New tenants/ tenancy termination. Undertaken for every new tenant and every termination to gauge the quality of service, accommodation provided and, where appropriate, their reason for leaving. This helps us to tailor our customer service to meet the needs of our tenants.

- Officer visits. Again, this enables us to gauge the quality of service delivered to customers when an officer visits their home and introduce appropriate improvements.
- New developments. This enables us to gauge the satisfaction of tenants with the new home that they have moved into, and then introduce improvements to new developments.
- Care & Repair. To gauge the satisfaction of residents with the adaptations in their home, the overall service they received from 'Care & Repair' and to inform future service delivery.
- Service Improvement Plan – the TAC has been instrumental in shaping the content of our Plan which incorporates all the priorities identified by customers within our survey work. Most notably, this has already led to our improved approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and providing support services to older persons through the Independent Living service referred to above. A revised Service Improvement Plan has been presented to the TAC prior to receiving Board approval, and will set new priorities for 2006/07.
- Planned Maintenance programme – tenant focus groups were set up in order to consider the way in which we advised tenants about future planned improvements within their home. Tenants had said that we did not tell them early enough about planned work and, in response, a 5 year plan has been established from which tenants can gather early notification of such improvements. For specific scheme work, we have worked in partnership with local resident groups to include their choice of improvements alongside the priority work that is required to dwellings in order to fulfill our commitment to the Decent Homes standard and our own Three Rivers standard.
- People with disabilities – tenant focus groups have been held to consider the needs of disabled people. This has led to the establishment of the Independent Living service, better information being compiled on access to aids and adaptations and a six-fold increase in that budget over the last 2 years.
- Regeneration work – we are committed to including residents as early as possible within regeneration proposals. Meetings have been held with local residents at Sherburn Road and Dean Bank to ensure that their wishes are given full consideration in the development of regeneration plans.