

National Housing Maintenance Forum – Award Application

Category: Best Client

In response to our contractors request for training in regards to equality and diversity and tailoring their services, LHT Property Services developed the **THINK RED** project and **Measuring Up** project, aimed at Contractor front line staff.

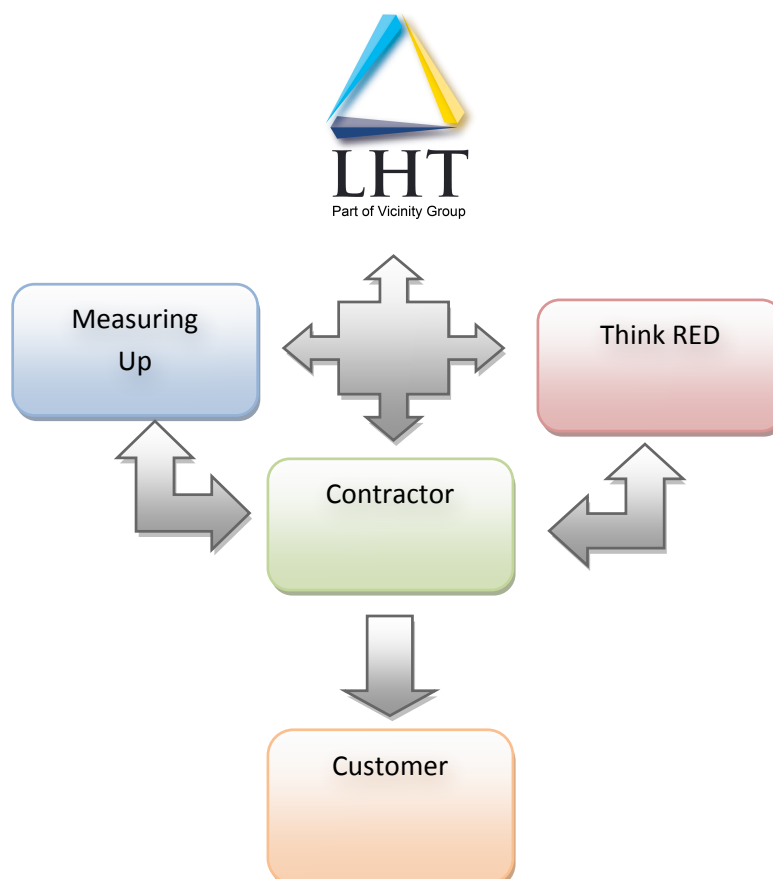
This involved a 'toolkit' which incorporated numerous forms of training. It consists of;

1. **Translation books** detailing key phrases in over 10 languages to assist with day to day interaction with customers.
2. **A contractor DVD** focusing on the equality and diversity strands, it was introduced to provide additional guidance and was designed to focus on improving customer care. The DVD is used by contractors at the pre-contract induction and was LHTs 2nd contractor training DVD, the first of which focussed on improving contractor on site health and safety.
3. **A contractor handbook**, this supports contractors in understanding our key requirements and what contractors can expect from LHT as a client.
4. **Contractor equality and diversity breakfast sessions** delivering information and inviting responses from contractors.
5. **The Afta thought training day.** The training day delivered interactive sessions through the use of drama, capturing real life scenarios; developed through consultation with customers, highlighting and raising awareness of what can sometimes be considered sensitive issues.
6. **Access to Construction Grant Funding** – LHT have worked in partnership with ConstructionSkills for a number of years and were influential in accessing construction funding for contractors to invest in internal training.
7. **Group Training Association** - Working with ConstructionSkills and key partners, the GTA was born. It is an exciting national trial and its focus is on supporting local displaced apprentices. **The GTA employs the apprentice** and then co-ordinates placements with the contractors who have signed up to the project. Displaced apprentices are sought from local colleges and educational schemes, they are interviewed to monitor their suitability for the scheme and placements are co-ordinated to suit.
8. **Setting Targets** – Our work has enabled us to set supportive but challenging contractor targets which include to CSCS, ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO18001 and Investors in People

9. **Contractor Conference** - Contractor conferences are held every 2 years and are attended by approx 200 delegates which focus on key industry topics designed to add value. Workshops have included contractor procurement, sustainability and health and safety.
10. **Transitional Employment Programme** – LHT have supported the transitional employment programme and facilitated a number of contractor placements to people who have been previously long term unemployed, offering opportunities within the construction sector.
11. **DIWise** – LHT contractors have provided training sessions regarding; joinery, electrical, and heating. A booklet titled **DIWise** has been designed for tenants giving hints and guidance on how to do some basic tasks.
12. **Tenants Conference** – A tenants conference is held every 2 years, where workshops are held for contractors to capacity build the skills of customers.
13. **Contractor Commitments** – A set of principles which we expect the contractor to meet when delivering the service to our tenants. They are summarized in a credit card size leaflet for ease of storage and access for operatives.

Question 1: **What is Innovative about the service provided?**

The **THINK RED** and **Measuring Up** projects are innovative in numerous ways as they were specifically designed for our contractors' front line staff and it was the first time that we have engaged with these staff face to face on such a large scale. This interface is crucial as these front line staff are often perceived as the face of LHT, and may often be the only contact we have with the Customer.



LHT consulted directly with the customer to determine important issues, as a result, LHT designed a 'goodie bag' with the **THINK RED** branding on it, consisting of a dustpan and brush, ski pass ID holder, and shoe protectors, reflecting customers wishes that Contractors left houses tidy and carried visible identification with them at all time.

The translation booklet has ensured that all our customers receive a tailored service, with many of our contractors going the extra mile to memorise greetings in the 10 key languages identified.

Through the breakfast's sessions, contractors are able to interact directly with LHT staff and thrash out any issues ensuring that the link between staff and contractors remains strong, resulting in a constant approach and therefore improved customer satisfaction.

This project, particularly the Afta Thought training event has ensured that our contractors are fully trained and sensitive to the diverse situations they may face, thus providing all our customers with a fully inclusive and tailored service.

Question 2: **What are the benefits to, the client, the contractor, the residents and the neighbourhood?**

Despite initial reservations around attending an 'E & D event using drama; all were pleasantly surprised when the event began, and their positive reactions and interaction with AFTA thought were testament to their positivity.

The feedback received has been extremely encouraging and has been described as;

'Hit the right notes, spot on, I have encountered these issues'

'Really different training, the actors were very good, much better than a presentation'

'Liked the actors and the interaction with the audience to ask questions'

From 106 surveys completed

98% rated the event as either very or fairly good

97% rated the level of information provided at the event as either very or fairly good

96% of the respondents found the event to be either very or fairly informative

97% felt the event would help to improve the service they provide to tenants.


Due to the impact of these sessions, the event has been rolled out to Vicinity Staff as part of their equality and diversity training programme.

As well as collaboration with Afta thought and consultation with our contractors and customers; in order to build a real picture of the issues faced, LHT also worked with a number of Key agencies in order to deliver the project ensuring contractors were aware of the breath and depth of key

diversity strands. Age Concern, The Richmond Fellowship, Construction Skill, LHT Housing and Support Team, Somali Service; all provided information and advice which was considered while compiling all the material for the 'toolkit'. They also attended the Afta Thought event providing exhibitions promoting their respective services

Part of **Measuring Up** – taking the Contractor Commitments directly to the operative - which involves the management team spending ½ day on-site with front line staff who are delivering our service, in an aim to embed the ethos of the project at root level.

Benefits of the initiatives built into **Think Red** and **Measuring Up**:

<p>1</p>	<p>Translation Booklet</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and improves contractor communication at the first contact with customers whose first language is not English. • Satisfaction improvements within our BME community • Help's to improve contractors efficiencies by reducing wasted time on abortive visits.
<p>2</p>	<p>Contractor DVD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised contractor awareness of the key diversity issues in delivering their services and allowed a focus for contractors to tailor their service in key areas such as vulnerability, age, disability, sexuality and mental health issues. • Improved customer satisfaction; is presently identified at 95%.
<p>3</p>	<p>Contractor Handbook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides contractors with additional information that supports their service delivery reducing contract lead in periods.
<p>4</p>	<p>Operative Equality & Diversity Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved customer satisfaction results and now 95% (responsive repairs survey data) overall. • Introduced greater tailoring of the repair service to meet our customers' individual requirements. • The contractors' feedback was very positive 99% satisfaction. We have seen consistent improvements within the satisfaction of our BME communities see item 1.2
<p>5</p>	<p>Afta Thought</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The integration with Afta Thought at the event proved to be the biggest success, as contractors found they could relate to the subject matter, one particularly pertinent section involved audio testimonial from a customer from the Islamic Community who talked through her despair at the apparent lack of knowledge and respect shown to her by Contractors, this proved to be extremely heartfelt and had an enormous effect on the operatives listening, Afta Thought also allowed direct interaction with operatives,

		<p>the co-ordinator of the event acted as mediator between the actors and the operatives allowing real dialogue to take place, which meant that contractors could fully explore and challenge any preconceived attitudes that were demonstrated in the dramatic sequences</p>																				
6	Access to Construction Grant Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All LHT contractors have benefited from 1-2-1 meetings with ConstructionSkills to identify their specific requirements. Additional funding has been accessed resulting in the following Contractor achievement <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2007</th> <th>2009</th> <th>2010</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ISO 9000</td> <td>14</td> <td>23</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ISO 14001</td> <td>2</td> <td>7</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ISO 18001</td> <td>3</td> <td>6</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IIP</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>27</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2007	2009	2010	ISO 9000	14	23	34	ISO 14001	2	7	24	ISO 18001	3	6	21	IIP	4	5	27
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7	Group Training Association	<p>25 local apprentices have now been placed with contractors and 12 of those have been with contractors directly recruited by LHT. The Contractors benefit from assisting in the development of an apprentice without the usual red-tape and bureaucracy that can be involved. The contractors are recharged £50.00 per week for each week they place an apprentice which is cheaper than usual costs involved with employing an apprentice. LHT will see value for money as the contractors will have increased resources.</p> <p>LHT will also see this as investment in the future- training the future workforce.</p>																				
8	Contractor competence Targets	<p>The benefits of driving continuous improvement through quality assurance systems are demonstrated as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The top 10 performing contractors have acquired 9000;2009 7 out of the top 10 contractors have achieved ISO18001 and 3 will achieve by end of the year. 																				
9	Annual Contractor Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback received from contractors. Raised competence levels relating to key industry areas such as sustainability, equality and diversity, ethical procurement. Reduced contractors training costs. Inspiring contractors and helping them understand the aspirations of LHT as a client, and motivating them to achieve the targets set. 																				
10	Transitional Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially creates additional employment opportunities. 35 additional construction jobs were created through their operations in repairs and maintenance during 2008-09. 																				
11	DIWise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided customers with additional skills to undertake basic DIY skills. 90 to date. Increased confidence when undertaking DIY tasks. Clearer understanding of faults and repairs. Building on relationships with the tenants and the 																				

		<p>contractors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has impacted on the number of repairs logged hence an improvement in efficiency.
12	Tenants Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports our aim to ensure our services deliver against our customer expectations.
13	Contractor Commitments	<p>Yet to monitor the effect of this initiative but aiming to see</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced complaints • Improvements in customer satisfaction • 'Right first Time' approach

Question 3: **What were the financial costs and benefits?**

As the projects were created and developed gradually into what we can now encompass as the brand **Think Red & Measuring Up**, the costs have been accumulated over periods of time – we estimate that we have invested no more than £5000 into these projects, taking into account, personnel resources, printing, filming, conferences, etc. The cost has also been minimised in that our contractors have been enthusiastic in being part of the project and have given their time at no cost to LHT. The enthusiasm was also indicative in the involvement from tenants and staff, who all gave their time and resources to enable us to achieve the success of the projects.

The financial benefits that we as a Client and our contractors are experiencing from the projects are;

- *Improved contractors efficiencies by reducing wasted time on abortive visits*
- *Provides contractors with additional information that supports their service delivery reducing contract lead in periods*
- *Additional funding has been accessed through ConstructionSkills resulting in the contractor achieving various accreditations – giving their business a formal qualification to enable them to compete effectively in a difficult climate*
- *It has impacted on the number of repairs logged hence an improvement in efficiency.*
- *The contractors are recharged £50.00 per week for each week they place an apprentice which is cost effective and reduces the usual costs involved with employing an apprentice*
- *LHT will also see this as investment in the future- training the future workforce*
- *Reduced contractors training costs*
- *'Right first Time' approach*

Question 4: **How relevant is this as an example that might be followed by other organisations?**

The projects have ensured that contractors have a greater awareness which will ultimately lead to an improvement in the quality of the service provided to LHT's customer base, through increasing contractors knowledge base regarding cultural practices and customs, any discrepancies in service can be highlighted and eliminated therefore making a positive difference to the communities and neighbourhoods that they service.

Our Contractors serve a host of other social housing providers and business, our innovative approach to equality and diversity training and tailoring the service will ensure that they are committed to achieving this, not only within the framework of LHT, but also within the wider community in which they work.

The comprehensive toolkit which LHT have developed has been meet with interest from other Housing Associations and has raised LHT's profile considerably, in this way LHT has lead the way for continued innovation.

Through consultation with our customers, the development of our 'toolkit' and by giving our Contractors branded 'goodie bags' we have made our Customers aware that LHT are not just playing Lip Service but have a real commitment to ensuring that the **Think Red** and **Measuring Up** initiatives are enshrined throughout our service to the customer. Customer awareness of the various aspects of contractor training assures them that they are the very heart of our Asset Management Services, which in turn reduces exclusion and raises satisfaction levels within all our customer groups.

Attachments:

- Translation booklets
- Contractor DVD
- Contractor handbook
- DIWise
- Contractor Commitments