

## **NHMF Best Practice Awards 2010 - Best Client**

### **The Wrekin Housing Trust**

#### **Learning from the retail sector - delivering a customer focused planned maintenance service**

“Supplying what the customer wants at the right price and to maximise customer satisfaction”

The Wrekin Housing Trust's in-house Asset Management Consultancy manages a capital improvement programme of £15m per year. In addition to this the consultancy carries out asbestos testing and removal, legionella testing, gas servicing and maintenance, cyclical maintenance and delivers contractor training on asbestos awareness and customer care.

Over a 10 year period the consultancy has carried out nearly 40,000 individual major work improvements, including kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows, rewires, central heating, external refurbishment, insulation programmes, ground/air source heat pumps and other green technologies.

### **How we deliver**

#### **Team Structure**

Striving for continuous improvement and the delivery of a customer-focused service, we both consulted our stakeholders and also looked outside the construction maintenance industry for examples of best practise. This included examples from retail sector giants such as Sainsburys/Asda and in particular, the Category Management model developed by the retail sector in the 1980's to manage product ranges as separate business units.

As a result, in 2006, the Trust's Asset Management Consultancy restructured from a traditional Surveying section to the retail based Category Management structure.

Individual category teams were created, consisting of a Category Manager, Quality Surveyors and Technical Admin/Liaison/admin support. The teams were given responsibility and empowerment for category related works throughout the company, enabling them to become experts in their work areas, understanding supply, delivery, customer needs and together, in partnership, achieve mutual goals.

Six Category Management Teams were formed:

- Kitchen Category
- Bathroom Category
- External Works Category
- Gas Category
- Electrical Category
- Building Services Category

The teams were set the following aims and objectives in the initial implementation period:

- To increase customer satisfaction from 94% (Currently 97.28%).
- To find efficiency savings and ensure below inflationary increases in planned delivery costs (£1.3m to date).
- To over deliver on contracts by carrying out additional work, within the overall budget (an additional 617 units completed last programme year).

Their key aim and objective became: -

“To be and seen to be the best at delivering planned programme work”

## IT Support - Infomania

To delivery Category Management and its aims the consultancy needed a 'real time' management tool that would integrate with existing systems.

Following extensive consultation with the market, we decided to develop an intranet based performance information application in-house, that links to the organisations main ICT management system.

The system called 'Infomania' enables teams to monitor and review contract PIs, including: -

Decency levels, Progress against budget, planned programme progress, in-date gas service levels, customer satisfaction feedback, complaints and SAP ratings. All by individual contractor or work areas, together with access to over 30 performance and information based reports.

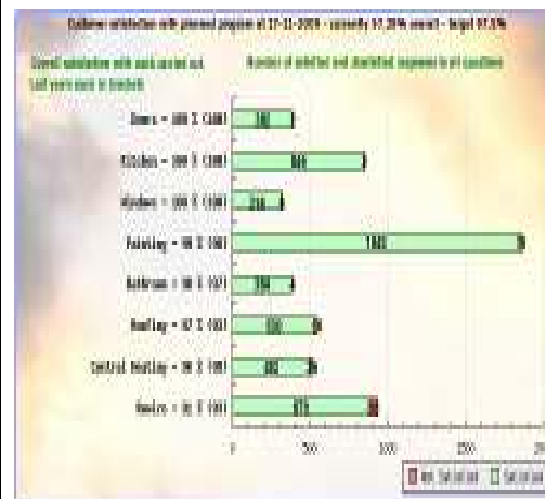
This feedback then helps us shape and improve the service we provide to our clients and tenants.

## Example Infomania Screen Shots

### % Non Decency



### Customer Satisfaction

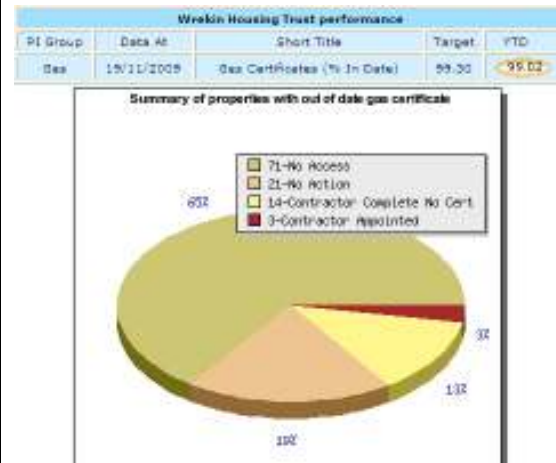


## Example Infomania Screen Shots

### Contract Monitoring

Working Week 2008/09 - Total of 200 contracts						
Contract reference		Job title				
Target job	Logged job	Completed	Outstanding			
179	46	285	179			
Additional jobs						
Total planned	To call requests	Planned total	Comments			
0	14	1	10			
Contract satisfaction						
Total jobs	Complete returned	Customer satisfied	% Satisfied returned	% Customer satisfied		
100	87	49	10	100		
Areas of dissatisfaction - % by category						
High customer satisfaction	Quality of work	Speed of response	Value for money	Other issues		
0	0	0	0	0		
Total completion						
Jobs	Post completion	Planned	Planned	% Post completion	% Planned	% Total
100	10	10	0	100	100	100

### % In Date Gas Certificates



## Involving Stakeholders in service improvement

Category teams ensure all stakeholders are involved in the service improvement process. Monthly contract/budget meetings are held, as well as quarterly service improvement meetings, which are attended by tenants, contractors and clients. Tenant quality inspectors regularly visit works on site and feedback assessments to quarterly meeting.

Tenants are involved at all stages of the planned programme from inception to completion, including: -

- Workshops
- Specification development
- Pre-tender planning
- Tender interviews and vetting
- Reviewing existing contracts
- Quarterly category meetings
- Quality auditing on-site works
- Regular attendance at contract meetings

The category teams can demonstrate they're listening to their clients by learning from feedback and implementing improvements in service delivery.

The work of the consultancy has been highlighted in the National Housing Federation book on resident involvement and property services best practice - "Your place or mine?"

## **Questions to be addressed**

The Category Management model we have adopted provides the platform for the delivery of a high quality service that addresses the needs and demands of our Client and tenants.

### **Question 1 What is innovative about the service provided?**

In what way is it innovative?

The Category Management model was developed by the retail sector in the 1980's to manage product ranges as separate business units, however, we have adopted the concept for delivery of planned improvement works.

Why was this innovation necessary?

Previously, various individuals and sections dealt with like work areas throughout the company, resulting in a disjointed service with many variations on a theme, including differing specifications and quality standards. Also, it was very difficult for employees, clients, customers, etc, to either access the right person when required or in any way influence service delivery.

How did the innovation evolve?

After consulting with our clients and tenants, the need to change became clear. Researching the market across a number of business sectors provided us with the concept of Category Management and its apparent 'fit' within the Construction industry.

How do you expect it to grow?

The service will grow as the company grows and expands up to the point of optimum service delivery when PI's, including satisfaction levels remain consistently high. We are now delivering planned works for local schools/Local Authority and provide consultancy services to other RSL's.

How do you monitor how effective it is?

Continuous, on-going consultation and involvement with our stakeholders and the management of our programmes with the support of infomania.

## **Question 2 What are the benefits to: -**

### **a) The client,**

Standardisation on service delivery, specification, best value, single/clear points of contact for clients, residents and contractors. We are delivering more work for less money, stretching the budget further.

### **b) The contractor,**

Strategically developed programmes of optimum longevity, embraced and endorsed by multiple stakeholder involvement and clarity on future workloads. Contractors are using the good practise learnt as a competitive edge in other tender situations.

### **c) The residents,**

Involvement at all stages ensures that service delivery and products are as required and reviewed to continually meet customers changing expectations.

### **d) The neighbourhood,**

Enhanced environment, ownership and well being with resident involvement

How does it enable the client and the contractor to provide a better or more efficient service?

Clear channels of communication, feedback, clarity on programmes, specs and involvement from stakeholders ensure that the contractor and client are delivering what the customer wants at all stages of service delivery.

What improvements are experienced by residents?

Excellent service delivery and quality of product including involvement in process improvement, confirmed by positive resident feedback and high KPI's.

What wider community benefits does it provide?

£15,000 of efficiency savings have been donated to the 'Trust Panel' and funded gas safety awareness and a 'grow your own veg' scheme

Does it also contribute to meeting the government's efficiency targets and/or sustainability targets?

We have to date saved over £1.3m in direct cashable savings and our waste initiative scheme introduced to our contractors was a finalist in the 2009 Sustainable Housing Awards.

What evidence do you have of the benefits in each case?

We have a published log of efficiency savings.

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

What were the costs in developing and implementing the best practice services?

Development costs were minimal as the emphasis was very much on differing managerial practise and procedures, whilst, utilising existing staff.

What are the additional costs or financial savings in running the services, and from what do they arise?

Additional costs in running the service include, management training for staff in new posts, costs of developing, producing and implementing new agreed service standards.

How do you measure the financial benefits?

By the establishment, maintenance and publishing of efficiency logs for all direct and in-direct cashable savings gained through improved practises and/or service delivery.

Is there any independent audit of these benefits?

Yes, by our internal Finance section, external inspectors and anyone else who views the log and wishes to express an opinion.

How are these benefits shared between the parties?

Savings are reinvested into planned programmes and delivery of additional work.

How do you expect these to change in the future?

Future financial benefits will reduce as high levels of service delivery are maintained.

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

What kinds of organisation might benefit from a similar approach, and how might they identify themselves?

Any organisations that have a number of different business area's, people and/or sections dealing with like works and customers.

How much does its success depend on your own unique circumstances?

Success is more dependant on attitude of staff and support from senior management, rather than, circumstance.

What expertise is needed to make it a success?

Willingness to accept change and development.

What training would be needed by managers and operational staff?

Training would include, management, customer focus and basic IT awareness for new software.

Where can they go for assistance or more information?

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