

## What is innovative about the service provided?

The Tenants' Federation were empowered to lead and work with the contractor in organising the internal decoration to tenant's flats. The innovative approach was that the Tenants' Federation were allocated the budget of £45,000 to carry out the programme. The administration of the budget is carried out by the Head of Housing and Maintenance.

Hornsey Housing Trust Tenancy Agreement states that "the Trust will normally decorate at least every seven years the inside and outside of your home and any communal areas in your estate."

The Tenant Federation worked closely with the contractor to identify properties that will be decorated within the financial year 2008/09. The criteria for selection of tenants were based on:

- ❖ The length of the tenancy
- ❖ The age of the tenant
- ❖ The condition of the flat
- ❖ The vulnerability of the tenant
- ❖ Any other special circumstances

The innovation was necessary because the Tenant Federation were about to take legal action against the Trust for breach of tenancy agreement as some of the tenants flats were in poor state due to failure to carry out internal decoration to flats in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

The innovation evolves by joint working between the Tenants' Federation and the Trust. The Head of Housing and Maintenance worked closely with the Chair and representatives of the Tenants' Federation to address the problem. At one of the meetings, the Head of Housing and Maintenance suggested to the Tenants' Federation that he was prepared to run a pilot programme where the Federation would lead and direct the internal decoration programme. The Tenant Federation welcomed this idea and a report was presented to the Board of Hornsey HHT. This was agreed and the pilot commenced in June 2008.

A contractor that has worked with the Trust for over 12 years was selected by the Tenants' Federation to carry out internal decoration. This contractor is very popular with tenants especially the elderly ones who are

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special needs. The contractor is aware of the

tenant's history of providing good quality repairs

service offering value for money.

This innovation is expected to grow next year as the Tenants' Federation working group have received positive feedback from the tenants whose flats have been painted and more tenants are now on the program for both the current and next financial years. The internal painting programme will be published in the tenants newsletter and the contractor has identified dedicated operatives to carry out the decorating, working around tenants availability and circumstances.

The effectiveness of the innovation is jointly monitored by the Chair of the Tenants' Federation and the Head of Housing and Maintenance on a monthly basis. Targets are set for the contractor to complete an average of 1 property per week. The average cost of carrying out this work in a one bedroom flat is £1500.00. The cost involves packing and unpacking tenants' furniture and carrying out minor repairs identified at the time of decoration.

The tenants are offered choice of colours and the type of paint used. Where possible, this is incorporated into the decent homes programme and the cyclical / planned maintenance works to minimise disruption to tenants.

We have carried out desk top analysis of price using schedule of rates and found out that our approached offered value for money. For example, Two different contractors on our books were asked to quote to carry out redecoration works of a similar 1 bedroom flat, the quotations received were between £2,500.00 and £3500.00.

Lastly, our tenants preferred us using the contractor they chose, this reduced the number of complaints received and increased the level of tenants satisfaction with the service received from the Trust.

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## What are the benefits to the client, the contractor and the residents?

The above enabled the Trust and the contractor to provide a better service because the roles and expectation of tenants were made clear. The Tenants' Federation dealt with the initial query or complaint. The innovation here was that tenants were managing the initial complaint. Thus the concept "**Tenants dealing with Tenants**". The Trust ensured the issues of confidentiality and data protection are carefully managed. The Chair of the Tenants' Federation was at that time a Tenant Board member which made things easier to manage.

The tenants felt that they have been listened to and that the Tenant Federation had made a big impact by taking the matter directly to the Trust Board and that the Board had trusted the Federation with such a difficult task to administer amongst elderly tenants.

Some of the feedback from the tenants was discussed at the monthly Tenant Federation meeting, and some tenants cannot wait until next year for their flat to be decorated.

The Chair of the tenants has a lot of positive tenant feedback for example quote from a tenant "I am extremely happy that my flat has been decorated after 13 years since I moved in. I cannot believe it when the contractors rang me to make an appointment and offered me choice of colours" Tenant of Abyssinia Court.

In our opinion, this programme does contribute to meeting the government's efficiency targets in that the internal decoration programme offers value for money, avoids duplication of efforts and resources, offers HHT an opportunity to bring the housing stock above the Decent Homes Standard and demonstrate tenant's involvement in managing and maintenance of their homes.

The wider community benefit is the use of local labour and material in carrying out works.

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## What were the financial costs and cashable benefits?

Hornsey Housing Trust is a small RSL with 385 properties. The financial benefits to the Trust are very significant as every penny counts. The internal decoration budget is £45,000 for the current financial year. With an average cost £1500, we are able to carry out 30 internal decorations to flats. If the internal decoration cost were £2500, we would only be able to carry out 18 internal decorations to flats.

There was no cost in developing and implement the best practice service. It only involved Officers time in ensuring that the pilot was carried out as agreed and also ensuring that tenants are satisfied with the service they received from the contractor.

There are no additional costs but there are financial savings in running the services. We were able to gain access into properties we would not normally have access to and we were engaging with more tenants than we would normally do. The access to properties means we were able to update our data base on stock condition survey and have access to carry out annual gas safety checks on time.

## Question 4

### What lessons might be learned by other organisations?

We would like other organisations to have learned from our approach that engaging with tenants groups does offer an opportunity to improve service at no extra cost and increases the level of tenant satisfaction. By engaging with the tenants groups, you are be able to maintain the housing stock better, have better information on tenants and the issues they would like the organisation to address. The concept of tenants dealing with tenants does work and offers significant savings on staff time and resources.

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on the level of tenant participation, no of amount of BME representation and the commitment from the organisation. Success is also dependent on the amount of training given to tenants and how the tenant groups view the organisation on delivery of promises.

Officers would need to have training on managing tenants' expectations and working with tenants to achieve a common goal.

If this were to be done again, I would like to

- ✓ Directly employ the operative
- ✓ Have a shorter turnaround time for decoration
- ✓ Ability to negotiate the price further
- ✓ Use of some active tenants to carry out decoration
- ✓ Better link into the planned and cyclical programme
- ✓ Offer more training for tenants on managing complex complaints