



Case Study: Gloucester City Homes (GCH)

Gloucester City Homes (GCH) manages and provides housing services for 4,800 tenants and leaseholders. GCH mission is to provide a better quality of life to every tenant and leaseholder by delivering exceptional services and providing decent homes in successful communities. GCH strive to achieve excellence by improving their service standards, taking into account their views and priorities of customers every step of the way. CSE was a logical step to focus on tenants needs and engage employees to deliver the exceptional service their mission prescribes.

The Journey

The partnership between G4S Assessment Services (G4S) and GCH began when G4S hosted several Customer Service Excellence (CSE) seminars dedicated to uniting employees and the process to make the journey clear and achievable.

Following on from the G4S seminars GCH set-up a CSE project team, Lisa Howarth, Head of Customer Services and Community Investment recalls the team 'consisted of appropriately placed managers and customers, with passion and experience in customer service and service improvement.' The project team evaluated GCH against the CSE framework to form a project plan which aspired to transform any weaknesses into strengths. The framework and review had a strong influence on how GCH approached the project by identifying areas of weakness which needed to be addressed. Lisa comments "the appraisal highlighted a number of existing practices that already demonstrated customer service excellence as well as a strong customer focussed culture".

The project team met on a weekly basis to ensure communication remained fluid throughout the organisation and all staff were also briefed by Lisa Howarth in partnership with G4S. During the process the G4S team were always on hand to answer any queries and provide support.

The GCH team integrated their approach to reinforced top-level commitment to the process via the attendance of the Chief Executive at staff meetings. Lisa comments "the team took an integrated approach and also devised processes to reinforce

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customer focus by developing customer service champions, a customer complaints review panel and a comprehensive customer focus strategy."

In December 2008, prior to the full assessment G4S visited GCH to carry out an informal pre-assessment of GCH draft application to provide constructive feedback. Mike Smith, the G4S assessor recalls "this proved to be a valuable opportunity to review the progress and prepare for the full assessment."

The Result

GCH commitment and preparation towards achieving the standard ensured their successful accreditation. During the assessment in March 2009 Mike Smith, was extremely impressed describing the accreditation as an "unprecedented achievement". GCH achieved nine compliance plus awards, demonstrating specific areas that exceeded the standard set making them examples of best practice. Mike commented "This provides a good example of how G4S worked in partnership with GCH to achieve the CSE objective of improving service at the point of deliver".

Recognising the standard as a journey GCH has created a sense of energy in developing the approach to improving services. Working with G4S to achieve the process has enabled GCH to better understand the needs of their customers; in turn they have developed an approach which enables greater consistency in customer service, enabling the organisation to provide services which are tailored to meet customers' needs. Lisa confirms "we're able to report continued improvement in all elements of GCH services and with services overall."

GCH's commitment and achievement was recognised when they received the 'G4S Assessment Services 2009 CSE Recognition Award' at the National Recognition Event. Lisa comments "achieving CSE recognition was fantastic and very significant, this award placed GCH as one of the best social housing providers in the Country in terms of customer service excellence and the award is something our tenants, staff and board at GCH are extremely proud of. CSE is not just about our Customer Service Team, although this front line team are critical, true excellence is about creating a culture and leadership structure that empowers and motivates our staff to deliver exceptional customer focussed services."