

TENANT PANEL REPORT



ABOUT THE PANEL

The panel was brought together in April 2012 by inviting people from tenant involvement groups already in existence, there have been many changes over the years and the current members of the panel are:

Shirley Green *Chair*
Lyn Gadsby *Vice Chair*
Win Buchan
Heather White
Linda Wray

Review of Customer Reach within Derby Homes

Purpose of review

Derby Homes needs to meet the requirements of the 4 Home and Community Association (HCA) Standards. There are 4 standards which are:
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
Home
Tenancy
Neighbourhood and Community

The HCA sets consumer standards so tenants, landlords & stakeholders know the outcomes that are expected. This is crucial if tenants are to be able to hold landlords to account effectively.

The HCA's role is limited to setting the consumer standards & intervening only where failure of the standard could lead to risk of serious harm to tenants (the serious detriment test).

As the HCA does not scrutinise or police these standards, the Tenant Panel feel it is important to carry out a review and have decided to look at Tenant Involvement and Empowerment to ensure standards are being met and that Customer Engagement is embedded throughout Derby Homes, this report documents our findings.

In 2013 Derby City Council carried out a full review of services within Derby Homes and decided that Resident Involvement needed to be refreshed. As a result of this the Customer Engagement and Community Development Team have become more proactive in their approach to customers, staff and the wider public.

The panel felt it was necessary to assess if this was the case.

What we did

Due to the complex nature of the review and the many different aspects needing to be looked at it was carried out over a four month period.

The purpose of this review is to ensure that Derby Homes consistently adheres to the standards set out by HCA, to see if any areas need improving along with establishing that Customer Engagement has been embedded throughout the organisation.

Areas we thought would be important to review:

Customer Engagement and Community Development Team (CECD)
Local Housing Office staff
Derbyshire Association of Community Development (DACP)
Housing Management Training
Mechanism for capturing engagement information – Clearview reporting system
Volunteers
New Build function

We carried out the following meetings with:

- Customer Engagement and Community Development Manager
- Customer Engagement Assistant
- Members of DACP
- Housing Management Trainers
- Housing Officers
- Community Development Co-ordinator
- Communications Manager
- New Build Manager
- Reviewed HCA framework for Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

Observations

CECD Manager Meeting

The CECD Manager explained that he is responsible for overseeing the following areas of Customer Engagement:

Community Rooms
Social Functions
Events such as Dignity Day
Open Days such as Love Parks involving the whole community
Information Days using the van
Derby Home's Charity of the year
Communications Team
Community Development

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He also told us that his team interacts with other staff from Derby Homes, tenants, residents and the general public in different communities throughout the City, explaining why this is very important to Derby Homes. Previously the role of the CECD Team was not fully understood by staff let alone our customers so a great deal of work has been carried out to improve this. There was a new strategy put in place covering 2013-2016 outlining future plans, see appendix 2.

We used this document to review progress in this area and to ascertain the impact the new strategy has had.

Customer Engagement Assistant

The assistant's role is to manage the Community Room bookings and support groups holding events, this includes managing diaries to co-ordinate room usage, completion of booking forms, invoicing for payment and general awareness of the condition of the rooms. Any complaints received regarding Community rooms would be either dealt with by the assistant or passed to the relevant Local Housing Office to deal with.

When any consultation is required with our customers, LHO staff will come to The Hub to have a consultation survey created in Clearview. Once the first results are input to Clearview, the CECD assistant will build a reporting dashboard to show and share all results.

The CECD assistant gets involved in all engagement events and will co ordinate with other staff to ensure their smooth running.

Community Development Co-ordinator

The Community Development Co-ordinator has a responsibility to show tenants and other community members how they can take charge in their areas and bring projects to fruition, enabling them to start projects in the Community and carry them on when he steps away.

Examples of where this has happened are:

Bramblebrook Community Centre
Hope Wrestling Academy
Wilmorton allotments

We felt his enthusiasm for the job and his positivity shines through, he shows people in the community what they are capable of. His Bramblebrook success is one shining example.

DACP

The Derby Association of Community Partners (DACP) was formed in 1995 to act as an umbrella group to bring Customer Panels together and to be a voice for tenants, these customer panels are no longer in existence.

They now keep in contact with tenants through the monthly DACP meeting and newsletter. These meetings are open to all and generally centre around topics useful to customers. There is a facebook page, we think an easier search such as

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DACP would be more beneficial as not everyone knows the DACP stands for Derby Association of Partners..

The DACP work closely with CECD Team to resolve any customer related issues and have previously facilitated mystery shopper exercises in relation to voids and Local Housing Offices.

Housing Officers

The Housing Officer role includes:

Offer sound advice to the public, through working flexibly to offer good customer service on all aspects of housing management.

Provide an estate and tenancy management service to a designated area to include

- Enforcement of tenancy conditions
- Estate development
- Liaison with contractors and other agencies to ensure estates and communal areas are maintained to a good standard
- Consulting with tenants, residents and other people about estate development and management
- Dealing with any concerns that tenants and residents may have

Where ever possible collect customer profile information

Links between Housing Office staff and The CECD Team have been made stronger by working closely together on the creation of surveys and the Customer Survey doorstep campaigns.

CECD Team have worked with the Housing Services Manager to re-establish the Housing Officer roles within the Community Rooms, this is of benefit to our customers as it allows them to touch base with a Housing Officer without the need to go to a Local Housing Office.

One of the main issues the Housing Officers reported was that their tablets did not always work while out on the estates, therefore preventing them from completing a survey directly to Clearview, meaning they have to take the details on paper and input to the system when back in the office.

Housing Management Trainer

The Housing Management Trainer agreed with the Tenant Panel that more emphasis needs to be placed on engagement with tenants from a Local Housing Office perspective. She did acknowledge that interaction between housing officers and the CECD Team has improved through carrying out the doorstep surveys, but also felt that the Housing Officers are slightly reluctant to take back responsibility for Community Rooms.

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She feels that the induction process needs to be standardised as every Housing Officer does it differently and a definite emphasis needs to be fed through to all staff on customer engagement.

Customer Communication Team

The Customer Communication Manager described the make up of his job. His post is an 18 month temporary contract aimed at improving communications with tenants, the general public and staff. He's planning a strategy which will come into effect in August 2017 and plans to implement more social media engagement both internally and externally, e.g Facebook and Twitter.

Derby Home's general website and the intranet for staff are both being improved.

Other areas covered are:

Liaising with the Council's Press Office.

Production of Derby Homes News - Derby Homes News is produced quarterly but is felt to be too reactive, plans are to make it more pro-active and more appealing to younger tenants. Plans include looking at different methods of issuing derby homes news such as email. An email database is being built for all customers, it is planned to issue Derby Homes News digitally once complete.

The Customer Communications Officer post also runs for 18 months, this role is one of a 'roving reporter'. The Communications Team are currently recruiting a customer communications apprentice.

The proposed initiatives look inspiring and hopefully will yield positive results for the entire organisation.

Clearview

Clearview reporting system is online software which is used to record all manner of customer engagement and activities including Estates Pride consultations, meetings, Community Room events, Board training, Youth Board Activities. There is also a reporting module which displays the results of all surveys, activities and meetings carried out.

Clearview has been fully embedded within Local Housing Offices, although it seems there was some resistance to this at the beginning. It is used by Managers to monitor staff input rate of surveys, view outcomes of reports and to identify issues raised by customers within their area. Housing Officers use Clearview to complete the Customer Survey and carry out consultations in relation to Estates Pride work.

SMT, staff at Local Housing Offices, Governance and CECD Team regularly use Clearview to assist in planning and assessing success of different events.

The New Build Team has interacted with CECD and have found the use of Clearview invaluable in helping them to assess the pros and cons of new build properties. Information they have received will be fed into future developments.

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CECD Team are able to report on the outcomes of activities and satisfaction figures to DCC with more accuracy than ever before with this system.

Volunteers

Since the introduction of the revamped CECD Strategy, Volunteers have become more visible throughout the organisation with a new Volunteer Strategy being put in place, appendix 3

Previously although there were volunteers, there was no way of documenting and reporting on either the activities they did or how much time they gave to Derby Homes. CECD has worked hard to correct this by going out and formally signing up current volunteers. All activity is recorded on Clearview and where possible attendance at events is also noted. This enables Derby Homes to recognise those who give up their time.

There is a Volunteer Tree in The Hub to promote the good work done, this has been a real eye opener for many staff as the number of volunteers Derby Homes have has never before been documented.

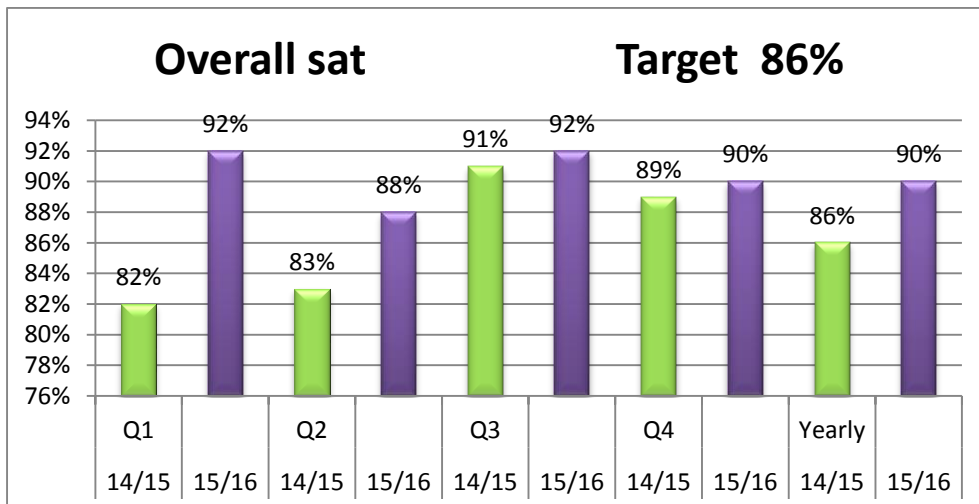
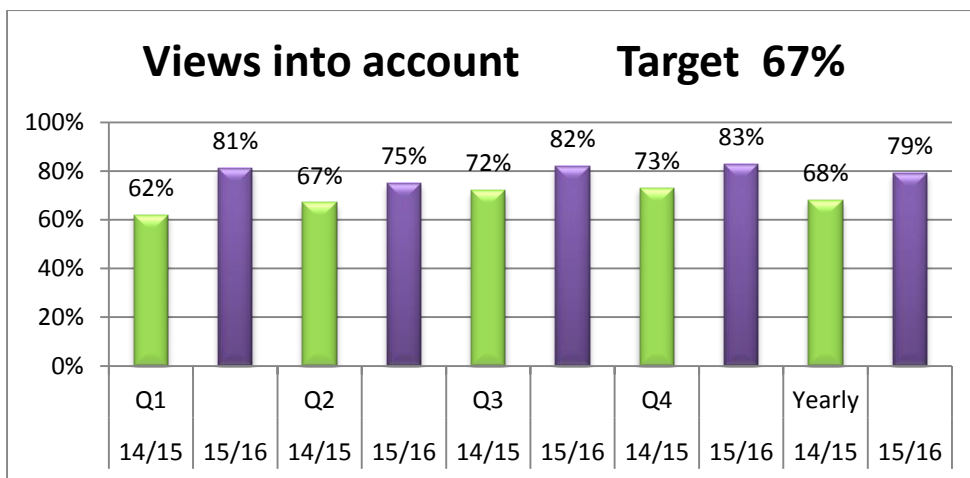
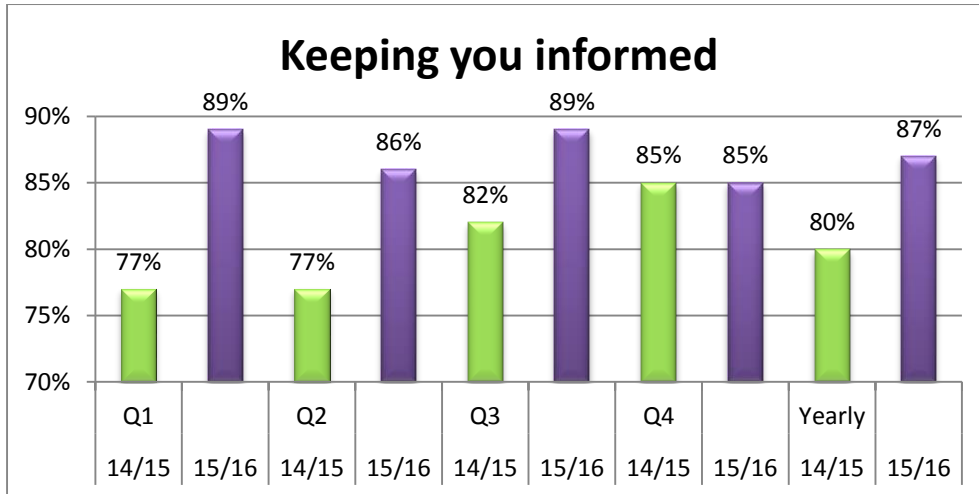
To further promote volunteers there is to be a Volunteer celebration in June to recognise and thank them for their contribution, there is also a one off volunteer publication which has been distributed throughout the City.

HCA Standard – Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

In line with this review we have considered the content of this standard and are happy to see that Derby Homes as an organisation, specifically with the guidance of CECD continue to comply. We are aware that Derby Homes are constantly reviewing and updating policies and procedures to ensure compliance if fully met. Full details of this standard can be found in appendix 4.

Conclusion

Having looked at all areas of the business, we feel that since the refresh of Customer Engagement and Community Development Team the far reaching engagement with customers and the general public has increased and has shown a significant improvement in satisfaction figures, some of the main ones are shown below:



We also found that Derby Homes is hitting and in many cases over achieving against the HCA standards, this is a wonderful achievement for all staff and shows a consistency and commitment to customer service.

Recommendations

Recommendation: With the likelihood of library opening hours being reduced from July 2016. As an alternative we feel that Housing Officers could use their Community Rooms as a base so they are more easily accessible to customers.

This is certainly something the Local housing Offices could investigate.

Recommendation: Many LHO staff told us that they do not input survey results directly to Clearview whilst out on the estates due to the unreliability of tablets supplied. Investigate why tablets issued to staff do not appear to be fit for purpose.

This is currently under review. A dedicated team have been commissioned to investigate integrated technology and software; this project is reviewing all software to ensure compatibility.

I am extremely pleased with the full review that the Tenant Panel has undertaken. This has been a cross cutting review, covering many service areas that are aligned to engagement. The review has highlighted that engagement is embedded with Derby Homes services. That all Derby Homes staff feel able to call upon my team for support, advice and general help to enable them to fulfil their roles and achieve their objectives. The panel have identified a clear connection with us making the decision to cancel focus groups and planned meeting, moving away from the old way of engaging and moving fully to a face to face method, including the door knock and pop up events. This has clearly made a difference and is evident with Derby Homes' overall rise in customer satisfaction. This is pleasing for me to hear that it is recognised.

I would like to thank the Tenant Panel for all the hard work that they have put into this difficult cross cutting review.