



Working with a proven partner will help housing associations meet challenges and ensure real value for money.

Case study: Halton Housing Trust (HHT)

Halton Housing Trust (HHT) is a housing association that owns and manages 6,100 homes. The trust formed in December 2005 following the transfer of homes from Halton Borough Council. HHT identified an issue with their customer focus and recognised they needed to undergo a culture change project, therefore they engaged G4S Assessment Services as a partner.

The Journey

To scope the extent of the requirements we formed a project team, which spent ten days meeting with various stakeholders, ranging from apprentice plumbers to the Chief Executive. Our Business Development Manager, Mark Caddick, was heavily involved in the process and commented "the scoping exercise involved speaking openly with employees and shadowing visits to gain an appreciation of the work undertaken and the current culture of the Trust." Christine McLoughlin, Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development at HHT remembers "G4S took on board every aspect of our discussions with them. Once appointed they spent time with the organisation at all levels and in many different ways to help with the scoping and development of a specifically tailored learning solution for Halton Housing Trust"

Following on from the scoping exercise we conducted an evaluation of HHT's operations to assess the breath of learning solutions required. The diverse ethnic mix of customers required front line field workers to be sensitive when dealing with customers therefore there was a real need not only to improve the skill of the workforce but to also increase awareness and understanding of employees. A full training package, which took into account the needs of all 240 staff, was devised to provide real business benefit.

A significant challenge for HHT was to gain a full awareness and understanding of their customers so they could become central to HHT's service. Therefore an element of the project was to deliver equality and diversity training to all members of HHT from board level to frontline operatives. Attendees stated that uniting various employees and the practical application of examples was useful and "thought provoking". To underpin the objectives of each course a 'traffic-light report' was devised, this acted as a learning plan to reinforce behaviours and traits which were to be practiced, developed or stopped.

As HHT vision was to operate with a social conscience they needed specific customer services training to improve their customer focus and put their customers at the heart of their operations. Our solution was to provide training which explored the issues of customer service to make clear links between customer groups and HHT mission. The course brought together attendees with various experiences to provide this focus, a participant commented "excellent way of learning and meeting with colleagues whom I hardly ever encounter"

A full Management Development Programme was also deployed to HHT's managers. This reflected and contextualised performance and behaviours and provided the managers with the tools and strategies to move themselves, their teams and the Trust forward. The programme was imperative to the required culture change, as managers were ultimately responsible for steering and leading the process. To evaluate the learning and provide the most constructive feedback a 360° feedback exercise was conducted to identify their perception of attitudes and behaviours linked to the competency framework. This comprehensive approach ensured the training had a significant impact on modifying behaviours. Managers that attended recognised the benefit, with comments ranging from "enjoyable, relevant and beneficial" to "excellent course".

As a result of the partnership a successful two year culture change programme was delivered. The learning solutions engaged the workforce and overcame many of the barriers to allow them to become an effective organisation able to achieve its objectives, Christine remarks "Our experience is that they have always been willing to listen and continually review and improve the learning solutions". In addition Nick Atkin, Chief Executive at HHT commented:

"If you could have offered me the behaviour changes that we have seen across the Trust as a result of G4S's work (both training and mentoring) 20 months ago, I would have found it hard to believe. It was vitally important for us to embed a customer focussed culture across the organisation to ensure our people made our strapline a reality of 'delivering quality and excellence for all.' The G4S programme has enabled us to take a major step along this journey. If you asked me would I do this again the answer is definitely yes."