



True excellence is about creating a culture and leadership structure that empowers and motivates staff to deliver exceptional customer focused services

Case Study: Dale & Valley Homes

Dale & Valley Homes (D&VH) is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) established in 2006 to manage, repair and improve council-owned housing in the Wear Valley district of County Durham. They focus on the delivery of high quality housing management services to customers that offer value for money and respond to local needs and aspirations.

As a small organisation, with approximately 75 members of staff, the team deliver services to approximately 5200 customers within their 4300 homes.

D&VH came to work with G4S following a small tender exercise to all accredited assessment bodies identified by the Customer Service Excellence standard. G4S won this tender based on an assessment weighting of quality 60% and cost 40%

The Journey

D&VH have always prided themselves in their commitment to excellent customer service; through customer focus embedded within all services. The 2011-13, Business Plan identified the need to take this commitment further through the achievement of the Customer Service Excellence. The project was led by Clair Ord, D&VH customer insight manager in liaison with the Senior Management Team.

The G4S website was the focal point, making it a one stop shop for information, including handy guidance sheets on the processes involved with the assessments. At the start of the process D&VH's details were input into the website in order for G4S to understand D&VH needs and provide an appropriate service.

Whilst uploading information onto the website problems occurred with the speed and ease of use; however the G4S customer services were always at hand and were very helpful in ensuring problems were rectified quickly. This saw the introduction of system enhancements by G4S which showed how open they are to feedback and improvements.

The team were assigned Nigel Hunt as their key assessor. D&VH stated he was "extremely helpful, professional and reassuring throughout; ensuring the process was as pleasant as possible." Nigel held a pre-meeting with the team in order to answer their queries regarding the process. He also took the whole team through the steps involved so everyone knew what to expect.

In addition, Nigel was also contactable throughout to answer further queries the team had "he was with us every step of the way" they commented.

When looking back on the process they team remarked "The process was exactly as it was described in the G4S guidance sheets and the assessor ensured it was smooth and enjoyable for all staff and stakeholders."

The Result

Following their journey, D&VH successfully obtained Customer Service Excellence, highlighting to all stakeholders that the team are delivering customer focus within all aspect of their our service delivery. The team remarked the G4S tool "helped us self assess our customer focus and helped us identify the areas where improvements could be made; ensuring continuous improvement for the benefit of our customers."

Through the use of the Customer Service Excellence standard as a framework for customer service, a number of new provisions were introduced into D&VH:

- Customer Journey Mapping was developed and embedded into the Performance Management Framework as a tool for further investigation into poor performance. Customer Journey Mapping was also incorporated into the Customer Scrutiny Groups role as a framework for undertaking service reviews; this ensured investigations were undertaken effectively and focussed on the customer view point rather than staff views of a process
- Enhanced procedures in monitoring informal communications, through the development of a new IT system which supported other Customer Insight systems. This has enabled the organisation to log all customer communications and gain further insight into customer experiences

Customer satisfaction in all areas of service delivery has also improved:

- 93% with services overall compared to 89% in 2011
- 93% overall quality of their home compared to 89% in 2011
- 91% general condition of home compared 86% in 2011
- 88% with their neighbourhood as a place to live compared to 87% in 2011
- 89% with repairs and maintenance compared to 86% in 2011
- 89% with value for money for their rent compared to 86% in 2011
- 93% compared to 91% in 2011